

cedes in a muted and somewhat fuddled manner the very point my article was trying to make; (4) withdraws his concession under a smokescreen of equivocation. I do not wish to take up any more space by going into points (3) and (4) in detail; the reader will understand what I mean if he turns to p. 404-5 of Mr Frerking's article. Here he will be astounded to learn, in effect, that a man's happiness is, indeed, somewhat affected by his being tortured; but what is *essential* to his happiness is not *really* affected. So much for the sufferings of the just man. What a concoction of intellectual and moral bromide! Mr Frerking rightly says that certain eschatological views, which he infers to be mine by the sort of reasoning I discussed earlier on, are inconsistent with Christian doctrine; he may care to reflect on the application of his own arguments to the sufferings of Christ.

I was greatly moved by Mr Frerking's final peroration, and valued much else in his article.

A Response to Mr Meynell

by William Frerking

Glaucon's question is: Is the good man, just by virtue of being good, more fortunate than the bad?

My reply was: Yes, and for the following reason: The one good the just man possesses, no matter how many other evils he suffers, and the one good the bad man lacks, no matter how many other goods he possesses, is the good of *reasonable action*—which is what virtuous action is. Now this single good is of greater value than all other goods combined. Hence even the suffering just man possesses greater good than any bad man no matter how prosperous, and is more fortunate. Why is reasonable action a greater good than all other goods combined? Because it is the *essential* element in human good, and that for three reasons: (1) It is the good which corresponds to the essence of man, and the highest element in him: his reason, or mind, or soul; (2) It is that whereby the other human goods become good for *this* man; if they are not possessed and used through reasonable action, these things, though good when considered abstractly, can be bad for a particular man; (3) It is the only element of human good whose realisation is dependent solely on a man's own action, and not also or entirely on factors beyond his control.

Is the suffering good man happier than the prospering bad man? Happiness is the possession and enjoyment of one's good. Now the suffering just man, though he possesses and enjoys the essential element of human good, does not possess its fulness, and indeed suffers many evils. We cannot therefore say that he is happy. (Or if we do say this, we must use 'happy' in a qualified sense.) On the other hand, it does not follow that he is unhappy or miserable: for happiness and unhappiness (whose extreme is misery) are contraries, not contradictories. He does possess the essence of human good, and he has done what he could; he knows this and takes comfort in it; his sorrow, like all his other feelings, is moderated by what is reasonable; and so, though not happy, he is not unhappy or miserable, and does indeed possess peace. The bad man, on the other hand, cannot be a man of peace. For the desires arising from his vices are in conflict with those belonging to him merely *qua* rational being, and so his soul is twisted against itself. Through self-deception, adventitious pleasures, prosperity, the bad man can conceal from himself the pain of his state more or less successfully, for a greater or lesser period of time. He may thus avoid misery, and even unhappiness. But still he is in conflict, restless, without peace; and his state is closer to unhappiness than the suffering just man's state. And should he lose his prosperity, he will fall into unmitigated misery.

The substance of what I have just said is, I think, to be found on pp. 404-405 of my 'Reply' (*New Blackfriars* liv, 640 (September 1973), 393-407). However, my meaning there is obscured by some imprecisions of expression and by a failure to state explicitly, as I have done in the summary I just gave, my view on the relationship of the good and bad man not only to happiness and misery, but also to simple unhappiness. I am sorry if this has led to misunderstanding, and I am grateful to Mr Meynell for giving me the opportunity to clarify my position.

Nevertheless, I suspect that Mr Meynell has not been altogether fair in parodying what I say on pp. 404-405 of the 'Reply' as seeming to come down to the claim that 'a man's happiness is, indeed, somewhat affected by his being tortured; but what is *essential* to his happiness is not *really* affected'. ('Rejoinder', p. 320.) What I say there and I think can be seen to say, is that through sufferings and misfortunes a good man can indeed *lose* his happiness, but that nothing external can deprive him of the essential element of human good (reasonable action), and so he cannot fall into misery—or even, as I should have explicitly added, unhappiness. In saying this, I do not think that I become incapable of taking seriously the sufferings of the just man. I can still see that there never was, and never will be, sorrow like Christ's sorrow, and that his saving work could not have been accomplished without it. Yet I do not think we would say that Christ

was unhappy, even during his Passion, and I am sure that we would not say that he was miserable.¹

Nor am I conceding 'the very point' Mr Meynell's article was trying to make, and then withdrawing my concession 'under a smoke-screen of equivocation'. Part of Mr Meynell's point was indeed that the just man through suffering can lose his happiness, and this I concede. But I do not equivocally withdraw this concession when I add that the just man cannot lose his peace or become miserable, but make a further claim. Whether Mr Meynell agrees with this claim or not, I do not know, for he does not tell us. But he does certainly hold that the wicked man can be happy, and hence that the good man is not always more fortunate than the bad. *This* is the central point of his article, and it, of course, I do not concede.

The part of my case which is hardest to establish is the claim that the bad man cannot be happy, and some, though not all, of what Mr Meynell says about this raises a genuine difficulty for me. Mr Meynell goes so far as to assert that wickedness is a necessary condition of happiness in most forms of human society. The consideration he offers in support of this—that most societies are so corrupt that only a wicked man will escape the hostility of the ruling powers—may be true. But it will hardly suffice to show that wickedness is the royal road to happiness if, as I claim in my 'Reply', the wicked man by virtue of his wickedness necessarily loses 'the deepest sort of peace' (p. 404), which 'is the heart of the deep happiness in question here' (p. 405). In support of this claim I argue (pp. 403-404) that in giving up acting virtuously a man necessarily comes into conflict with his desire for truth, or with his desire to act in accordance with the truth; that these desires are natural, and his 'most basic desires as a rational being'; and that hence he loses the deepest sort of peace. Mr Meynell does not explicitly discuss this argument in his 'Rejoinder', but one can see what his objection would be from what he says about frailty and wickedness ('Rejoinder', p. 318). He distinguishes two types of bad man—the morally frail man and the wicked man—concedes that the frail man is necessarily in conflict and cannot be happy, and indeed presents his own argument to show this. In my argument I was in fact thinking of two types of wicked man—the one who does evil through deliberate shamelessness, and the one who does it through wilful self-deception—and although what I say

¹But speaking of the compatibility of what philosophers say with Christian doctrine, here I should like to clarify another remark I make in my 'Reply'. On p. 399 I say:

'Christianity teaches ... [that] a man ... who obeys the moral law not out of the love of justice, or of God, but with the avoidance of divine punishment and the attainment of divine reward as his sole or principal aim ... will be lost'.

It has been pointed out to me that this statement is, at best misleading. It would be better to replace it by the following:

'An implication of the explicit teaching of the Church appears to be that a man who throughout his entire life performs acts of virtue and abstains from acts of vice solely out of fear of divine punishment, being utterly without the love of God, cannot be saved'.

seems applicable to the frail man, it could be usefully supplemented by Mr Meynell's own considerations. But against my argument in respect of the wicked man, Mr Meynell would presumably object that such a man has enough 'psychic integrity' and 'ego-strength' to keep his desires and impulses sufficiently under the control of his (bad) principles of action to avoid inner conflict, or anyway serious inner conflict. I do not know just how to answer this objection. Presumably the reply must turn on the fact that the desires in question are *natural*, hence not completely eradicable by any degree of vice. If a man can completely repress the desires for truth, and for action in accordance with it, in one particular sphere, he cannot repress them in *every* sphere; and from this it might be shown that there will at least be conflict in a wicked man among his various vices, or between them and what remnants of virtue he still has. Perhaps, too, it could be shown that the loss of peace need not manifest itself precisely as open conflict among desires, but as restlessness, anxiety, boredom, or in some other form.

Contrary to what Mr Meynell suggests ('Rejoinder', p. 319), I do not hold that the observation about friendship I make on p. 403 of my 'Reply' is enough to show that complete virtue is a necessary—much less sufficient—condition of happiness. It is true that I do not mention the fact that virtuous action can lose a man friends. But had Mr Meynell read my 'Reply' more carefully, he would have noticed that in the second paragraph after the one to which he alludes I explicitly mention that virtuous action can lose a man his life, and observe that 'the appeal to friendship does not seem to take us the whole way we wish to go' (p. 403). And it is for this very reason that I then move on to the argument just considered about inner conflict.

It might be argued that whether or not the wicked man's vice necessarily causes him to suffer inner conflict or some other unpleasant or painful state, his vicious pleasures and enjoyments are taken in things which are not *true* goods, and hence cannot themselves be counted part of *true* happiness. This argument makes appeal to the distinction we draw in ordinary language between true and false happiness: true happiness is the possession and enjoyment of one's true good; possessions and pleasures, no matter how great and how unmixed with evils and pains, which are not truly good, can be said to constitute a *false* happiness, but simply speaking do not constitute happiness at all. It was with this notion in mind that I was objecting to Mr Meynell's conception of happiness. For it is clear from things he says in his article (as I show on p. 398 of my 'Reply') that he is prepared (unless some eschatological doctrine is true) to count as parts of true happiness things such as favour with one's group gained by approving colour prejudice, friendship among men who pretend to be benevolent, relief from self-awareness gained through a self-deception supported by oppression. But if such things are part of true happiness, then virtue cannot be the essential part

of human good. And thus it seemed to me that in his unexamined use of this conception of happiness, Mr Meynell was in effect prejudging Glaucon's question. I am sorry not to have made a clear statement of this point in my 'Reply', and without it pp. 396-399 can indeed be misunderstood. Moreover, Mr Meynell should be considered not to be prejudging Glaucon's question through his conception of happiness, but to be specifying his conception of happiness after concluding that virtue cannot be shown to be the essential part of human good. Still, as I observe in my 'Reply' (p. 396), one might well have expected, in an article entitled 'Glaucon's Question', a fairly full exposition of the grounds for such a conclusion.

That the conception of happiness in question is in fact Mr Meynell's is confirmed by what he says in his 'Rejoinder'. It is true that nothing in his article implies that he conceives happiness to consist only in external goods, and I was wrong to suggest this in my 'Reply'. But it is clear that he still considers that, failing eschatology, certain things not truly good are capable of constituting true happiness. In his 'Rejoinder' Mr Meynell says that he considers 'following the path of moral virtue as one sees it' and 'keeping a good conscience' part of happiness—but of course both these are quite compatible with vice, and even profound wickedness. With regard to the definition of true happiness, I subscribe to neither Frerking's Strong nor Frerking's Weak Thesis, but simply to Frerking's Thesis, to the effect that true happiness consists in virtue (real virtue, not its appearance) plus certain other goods, and with the absence of certain evils.

One final point: I do not argue, but observe that it can be argued, not that Plato's myths are equivocal, but that they have purely this-worldly reference. But if, as Mr Meynell suggests, Plato did intend his myths to have a double meaning, why must this be taken as evidence of equivocation on his part? It might instead be his way of saying that the good fortune of the just, to be perfected in the next life, is already to some extent realised in this life. And why not to such an extent as to give them an adequate reason, even in terms only of this life, for never giving up justice, no matter what the consequences?