

And To Dust All Return

“Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return. Who knows if the human spirit rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?” - Ecclesiastes 3:2-22

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In the countryside of the island of Kos there was a mansion, in the baroque style with a colossal garden that was divided into 12 sections. The mansion itself had 7 main rooms and 10 storage rooms. Aristotle lived in this mansion alone and he has been living here for the past fifteen years. Ever since his parents left him to wage war with the Persians. But Aristotle was never big about war. He saw it as pointless and futile, besides, there was no beauty in that, and who was he to pursue something with no beauty? That was a good question.

Aristotle liked questions, sometimes more than the answers themselves, well, it depends on how you look at it. But he spent most of his days pondering questions of different kinds. In fact, the 12 sections of the garden were divided into 12 sections because he thought that there were 12 kinds of questions in the world. Each time a question popped into his head of the one kind or the other, he would go to his map and find the corresponding section of the garden, and go and sit there to contemplate. Even though the questions were often hard and caused him a great deal of distress, he felt that because he was in his garden, his mind could be like the still water. That's why, he thought of his garden as “*Sanssouci*”.

The garden of Magnanimity

On the 19th of December Aristotle went to the garden of Magnanimity to ponder something that was presented to him by his friend, Amos. Amos had been out hunting. He usually hunted deers, but this time he was hunting a bear. He had with him his wooden bow and arrow with a steel tip, headed off to the woods. Of course, for protection against bears he also had on his heavy armor. It made his movement quite clumsy, but usually, since bears are slow and have bad eyesight, one could move slowly until one finds a bear, hide behind a bush, and then suddenly sneak up on them with the bow and shoot them in the head. According to Amos, bears terrorized people, it was not that they ever actually harmed any human being, but sometimes they'd come close to villages and people would get scared, so the village chief had ordered Amos to hunt the bears.

Amos had done this before and was experienced. But this time, when he was already deep into the pine woods and the trees were so thick they covered all sunlight, he suddenly smelled something burning. He thought maybe it was someone camping and making a campfire, but the smell grew stronger and soon he also saw the source of it. The forest was burning. There was fire coming from the distance, first just a bright flash, then grew exponentially towards his direction. And right then, a thick branch cracked and dropped from above onto his leg. He felt bones crack and a piercing pain. He tried to move, but the branch wouldn't budge and also his armor

was weighing him down. He looked at his leg, and then at the approaching fire. Not everyone has experienced a near-death feeling, but this was how Amos had described it to Aristotle. He said, at that instant he understood that none of his life actually mattered except for one action he had done in his youth. Aristotle had asked him what that action was, but Amos was vague. He just said, if we all return to dust one day, might as well give your best to others, so they keep that of you. When Aristotle pressed on, Amos had replied, "I don't regret doing that". So Aristotle dropped the question and instead asked about what happened with the fire.

Amos said, that after this sudden realization about the significant event in his youth, the next feeling that came to him was paralyzing fear. He thought of his mother, brother, and daughter that he would never see again in his life. That was when he regretted coming to this forest to kill bears. But suddenly, as if his thoughts were heard by the divine gods, a large brown bear showed up not far from him. The bear saw Amos and stopped in his tracks. The bear looked at the fire. It began to speak, and said, "you need help." Amos had never heard a bear talk, but for some reason he was not surprised. It made sense to him that bears could speak, and would speak to him at this moment. So Amos pleaded for the bear to help him. The bear said, "I know that you came here to kill me. In order for me to help you, I need you to give me a good reason."

When Aristotle asked Amos what he answered the bear, Amos had told him that because of the stress and the whole traumatic situation, he actually didn't remember what he told the bear. But the bear had been happy with his response and agreed to lift up the heavy branch, and carry Amos out of the burning forest even though it would have been much easier for the bear to run out and save itself. The chances of survival were much higher if the bear had run out itself, than when it was also carrying a human being with heavy armor.

The garden of Gentleness/Patience

Aristotle had a friend, Hannah, who was a princess of Egypt. Hannah had also grown up in a palace except this one was much larger than Aristotle's mansion and she lived there with her family, servants, and her tutor. At an early age her parents discovered that she was gifted and therefore ordered the erudite scholar, Jasmin, to be her private tutor. In contrast, her sisters and brothers who were much less gifted, were taught to help out in the house like the servants.

Jasmin taught her mathematics, poetry, history, literature, music, and the decorative arts. For example, they had a glass blowing house on the grounds of the palace and already when Hannah was 8 years old Jasmin taught her how to hold a glass blowing rod and to rotate it with the glass in the furnace. Hannah went on to learn to make glass vases, and statues that came to adorn the hallways and rooms in the palace. When Hannah was 11 years old, Jasmin taught her how to make ceramics that glowed in the dark. Ceramics was the art that Hannah liked the most, and all throughout her teenage years she made bowls, vases, flower pots, and she also learned to paint figures on the vases. Her father commissioned her to make large vases depicting the different wars and conquests he participated in. These were made to glow in the dark and be placed on the paths that winded around the palace gardens, so that residents could take walks during night time and have their paths illuminated.

There was one subject though that Jasmin could not teach her and that was why her father had travelled to Kos and consulted Aristotle. Her father asked Aristotle if he could be a complementary teacher and increase Hannah's ability to think critically. Aristotle had agreed, and they had become good friends and equals, with Hannah often challenging Aristotle when presented with questions and answers. They communicated to a great deal through exchanging letters, but once a year Aristotle would visit Alexandria, where Hannah lived, and they would have discussions in person.

One year during the autumn Aristotle was at home cooking and there was a knock on the door. Surprised, he found Hannah kneeling on the floor in front of his door, face in her palms, crying violently. He took her in, gave her some bread and water, asked her gently what had happened, what made her travel all the way to Kos to find him at this time of the year.

Hannah told him, that Jasmin had disappeared. One day when they were supposed to have a history class Jasmin didn't show up. Hannah was alone in the large library, she waited, there was nobody, she waited some more. When night fell, Hannah grew worried and went to her father. Her father had heard no news of Jasmin's whereabouts, nor could he have any idea about the reason for this event. The next day Hannah went to the library again to wait, but again there was nobody.

Starting to despair, Hannah thought of all the things that could have happened to her teacher. She could have been hit by a horse wagon, or stabbed in the marketplace by a knife attack, maybe fallen off a broken bridge, there were so many bridges collapsing nowadays. Maybe she was held hostage by a maniac. Or maybe, she had a heart attack? Maybe she went back to her homeland in Italy, because of some family issues? There were so many possibilities, and Hannah had a hard time concentrating on her life when she didn't know what had happened to her teacher. Sometimes she started to think, maybe I was not a good enough student, maybe Jasmin left me because she was disappointed in me. Those were the worst moments, and it made her feel like she wanted to stop existing.

"I was unhappy. Day and night, I brooded over the feeling that she left me, abandoned me. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat and I couldn't think. Everything in my life had been taught to me by her," Hannah had told Aristotle.

Aristotle pondered over this, he said, "Hannah, why don't you come sit with me in the garden of Gentleness/Patience tomorrow. We need to think over this seriously."

So they sat there, the next day, in the garden and didn't speak a word to each other. Hannah was again crying at first, but after a while, her tears stopped and she was silent. Together, they looked at the flowers and grass, at the birds that occasionally landed on a branch, at the insects crawling on the ground, at the stone pavement. At the end of the day, Aristotle said, "how do you feel now", and Hannah said, "A thought came to me that I couldn't let go of, I feel like I am always wanting good for others, sometimes I don't know if that is a weakness. All the

things that Jasmin taught me, and the things you have taught me, points only to one thing - the wanting of good for others. But now that Jasmin left me, it makes me doubt that as well. What is the use of all that she taught me?"

"You need to want that which is good for yourself too, Hannah," said Aristotle. "Can you think of something you can do which is good for yourself?"

"I want to go back home and build such a garden as yours on our palace grounds. I'll craft vases for the garden, but this time I'm not going to paint motifs of my father's wars, I'll paint the things that Jasmin taught me."

"You will not miss her too much, if you are painting the things she taught you? Remember, that I asked not what you can do for others, but what you can do for yourself," said Aristotle.

"I do not know, but I know that it is what will continue to make life meaningful," said Hannah.

Hannah went back home, and the next spring Aristotle received a letter from her. Hannah had gone traveling, for the first time in her life, except for the time when she came to Kos. She had always stayed on the palace grounds before when she was being educated by Jasmin. Now she was traveling with some of her father's men, to explore Egypt and see if they can find something of interest. New land to settle in a new civilization. They had found a cave, a cave with a large stone outside. On the stone, there were some symbols, like mathematical symbols. Her father's men who couldn't read asked Hannah if she could understand. Hannah could make out the symbols α , δ , ϵ , φ , π , ω , ∞ . Hannah had written to Aristotle:

"I saw the symbols carved into the stone and I had no idea what it all meant. But even though I had no idea what it meant, 'a gentle thought comes in my mind'. I don't know why I hadn't thought of it earlier. I thought, I can send Jasmin a letter, to her home in Italy. So I did that. I think, she never expected to hear from me, or to hear the words that I spoke, but she was there, she received my letter and she wrote back. And after a short correspondence, she agreed to come back to Alexandria."

Aristotle asked Hannah what it was she wrote to Jasmin.

"I'm sorry I pushed you away. [...]"

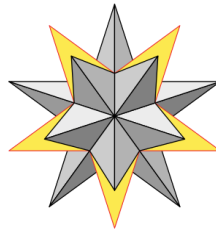
"And what did she reply?"

"[...] No, that is not a weakness, don't say that. Your weakness now is not that you want good for others, it is that you do not see how good you are yourself. [...]"

The garden of Truthfulness

When Aristotle came to the garden of Truthfulness he usually liked to think about some dialogues he has had with his friends. Aristotle had quite many friends, and each of them had their own field of expertise and were usually very good at what they did. They usually gave Aristotle a lot of interesting things to think about. Two of them were Kepler and Poincaré.

Kepler had told him, that one day when he and Poincaré were having dinner together, they had come up with a new geometric shape that nobody had discovered before. Kepler saw it in his mind, he described it to Poincaré, and then Poincaré had sketched it out on a piece of napkin. Upon seeing the drawing, Kepler had said “yup, that’s it.” Poincaré had said, “I bet Aristotle would want to see this.” They took the drawing to Aristotle and showed him:



Aristotle saw the drawing and said, “what’s this?”

Poincaré said, “well, we don’t have a name for it yet. Can you help us come up with one?”

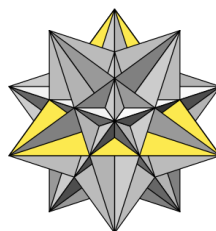
Aristotle said, “well, since it has 12 faces, we can call it a dodecahedron.”

Kepler had said, “I didn’t even notice it has 12 faces. It just looks like a star to me.”

Aristotle said, “star, you got that right, so it’s a stellated dodecahedron.”

Poincaré said, “that’s great, so we can call it the great stellated dodecahedron.”

Two years later, the two friends had come back to Aristotle with another drawing:



“What’s this?” Aristotle asked.

“We gave it a name already, it’s called the great icosahedron.”

“Why that?” asked Aristotle.

“It has 20 triangular faces. But more importantly it has 12 vertices, just like how the great stellated dodecahedron has 12 faces. They are duals to each other.”

“Oh, alright. That’s really interesting,” said Aristotle. “I think I want to show this to Pythagoras.”

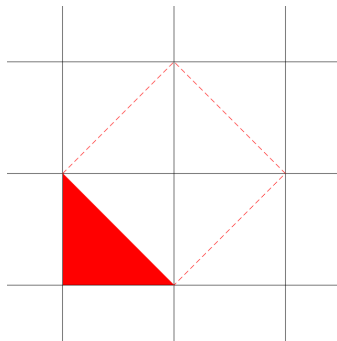
So Aristotle went all the way to Croton to meet Pythagoras. He showed the two drawings to Pythagoras and Pythagoras had said,

“Those drawings are nice indeed, but do you have a three-dimensional model for them?”

“Three-dimensional model? These are highly advanced geometric shapes. It would require much work to make a three-dimensional model out of them.”

“Yes, indeed. I’ve always believed in the power of simplicity. You see, I’ve come up with a theorem all on my own. It’s a simple theorem, much simpler than your polyhedrons, and it can be shown three-dimensionally.”

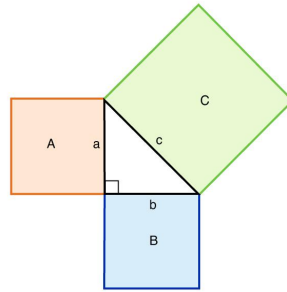
Pythagoras picked up a stick and started drawing in the sand:



“You see, I was walking around Samos one day and looking at the square tiles of Samos palace. I noticed that if you divide any of the squares diagonally, you would get two halves that are right triangles. Then I noticed, that if you augment each side of the triangle from one-dimension to two-dimensions, i.e. make a square, the square of the long side of the triangle has exactly the same areas as two of the squares of the short sides.”

Aristotle looked at the sketch in the sand and said, “that’s quite right.”

Pythagoras said, "This is my theorem. $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ " and he drew another figure in the sand:



Aristotle had been amazed at Pythagoras realization and the simple way it had been proven. There was nobody that could deny it, because it was right in front of you, in the sand. Aristotle asked Pythagoras what he thought of harder problems, things that one could not prove using simple methods by drawing simple geometrical shapes in the sand. Pythagoras had told him, "I don't really know. That's not my field of expertise. But you know, I have a friend, he often thinks about hard problems, especially problems that have to do with human beings. Human beings are so complicated, much more so than geometric shapes. And he always has something good to say about it. In fact, he gave me a book one time, where he had compiled some of his thoughts. You can borrow it if you like."

Pythagoras went back to his house and came back with a papyrus roll. "Take good care of it, my friend might be upset if he knew his gift had been damaged."

Aristotle took the roll with both hands and extended it. There were a great number of sheets and he took out one, and read:

"Common sense is not so common.

Faith consists of believing when it is beyond the power of reason to believe.

Judge a man by his questions and not his answers.

Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.

Love is a canvas furnished by nature and embroidered by imagination.

Man is free at the moment he wishes to be.

I have never made but one prayer to God, a very short one, 'O Lord make my enemies ridiculous', and God granted it.

All the reasonings of men are not worth one sentiment of women.

F.A. 1759”

Rather confounded, Aristotle went back to his home to read more in the papyrus roll and to think. He often felt, that music helped him think and understand things. His friend Plato had said something like, that music gives a soul to the universe. But he didn't really remember his exact words. Besides, Plato had never listened to Bach in his life, so he couldn't know about the music that we have in our time. Aristotle was thankful that he new Bach personally, because he was such an interesting man. They had met when Bach was on holiday in Kos, and decided to rent one of the guest rooms in Aristotle's mansion. When Bach started talking about music, Aristotle had been quite surprised because he was always referring to this instrument on which he composed, with keys that lay flat in two rows one above the other. Aristotle had lyres and played them himself, however this instrument Bach was talking about was just completely foreign and mind boggling. How do you even keep track of 60 keys, and two rows of them. It sounded all too complicated. Aristotle was about to reject the entire notion of this instrument but then Bach said,

“Let me show you a recording.”

Bach took out a device from his bag, that looked like a small radio with an antenna. There was a knob, which he turned a little up and down. All of a sudden, clang like sounds rang out from the device. Quick, staccato like but more steady. After a few seconds, a second melody joined the first, like two sine waves dancing together in mimic and oscillation. Quickly thereafter, a third melody came, this one with deeper notes. Amazed, Aristotle asked,

“What is this?”

Bach told him, “in the Well Tempered Klavier (WTK), I present a set of pieces written in different keys. For each key, there is always a Prelude followed by a Fugue. I try to make my music highly mathematical, that is where I get my inspiration, from the divine, you are familiar with mathematics I understand, but I think you have to reach a level of maturity to appreciate that. Are you familiar with the concept of homophony or polyphony?”

“No, not so much,” Aristotle said.

“Homophony is music with one voice and a harmonic accompaniment. Most of the music written after my time are homophonic. But during my time, the baroque era, polyphony was the standard. For example, in the WTK, I give each Fugue any from two to five voices. The voices interplay, imitate each other, and none of them are more important than the other. It requires a special technical skill to perform, it kind of requires your brain to be 3-dimensional.”

“3-dimensional? That’s what Pythagoras was saying. He wanted the great stellated dodecahedron and great icosahedron to be three-dimensional. He said they were too complicated to become three-dimensional.”

Bach said, “yes, complexity and simplicity are two sides of the same coin. Just like the two polyhedra you speak of. My music, they contain both complexity and simplicity. I can lend you this radio, if you like my music and wish to dive deeper. Inside this radio are all of my works, numbered and labeled BWV.”

From that day on, Aristotle listened to Bach every single day, before he went to bed, after a day of contemplating in his garden. Even on the day of Aristotle’s death he had still not listened to all of Bach’s works, because he had composed so many of them.

The garden of Justice

Aristotle had another friend who was the commander of a large army in Rome. His name was Virgil. Virgil did not choose to be a member of the military but was forced to do so by the Holy Roman Emperor, who dictated what profession every individual should pursue. Virgil was a strong pacifist hence being the commander of an army was a difficult task. It was like being an airplane engineer at a time when every country was at war and the only job there was was to design war planes. One had to make the best of it, still try to make something beautiful out of something ugly. So Virgil swore to himself when he joined the army, that his real goal was not to teach his men about war, but to teach them to be better people. He had hoped that one day soon the emperor would die (he was already very old) and be succeeded by someone who valued the arts more. Then his men could use all that he taught them for good purposes and their time in the army would not be wasted.

The way he did this was that in addition to physical training with arms, he held 1:1, dialectic conversations with each one of his men individually on a regular basis, to train them in thinking. For this, he had the help of Aristotle because of the number of good questions that Aristotle had. These dialectic sessions would take place in a corner of the barracks and begin with Virgil and the soldier bowing to each other. Next, Virgil would start by saying, “tell me something from your past week.” The soldier would tell about some problem or something that upset him but it could also be something that excited him or something he learned. Not often but a few times a soldier would start talking about something and then burst into tears because of frustration. Virgil would never question the soldiers’ experiences or even comment on them much, he only listened. He usually let the soldier talk for about fifteen minutes, whereafter he would say, “I have a question for you.”

He would proceed to ask the soldier to consider a hypothetical scenario, usually one that Aristotle had given him, sometimes it could be about war, sometimes about civil life, sometimes about other things, sometimes even about love. Then he would ask the soldier, “what do you think about this?”

No matter what the soldier replied, Virgil would not question the soldier’s experiences, even though he sometimes asked follow up questions, that led to the soldier himself changing his original standpoint. At the end of the session, Virgil always concluded by saying to the soldier,

“God Put a Smile Upon Your Face”

Virgil’s army had about 300 men, so conducting these 1:1 dialectic sessions took a lot of time. But Virgil felt that it was the part of his job that made him feel most fulfilled. He really cared for all of his men, and wanted to see each of them grow. He was usually fascinated by the different personalities, character and strengths present in each of his men. He didn’t see it as his job to command them, rather support them and be their companion.

There was one man in Virgil’s army that was different from the others. He was slower than others in picking up physical skills, such as sword skills, so they switched him to a spear, but that didn’t work either. During the meals, the man always picked out certain vegetables from his plate and wouldn’t eat them, he’d arrange them in certain patterns on his plate and left them there. When he met Virgil for the dialectic conversations, he usually would start singing when Virgil asked him to talk about his week. He didn’t have a bad singing voice, but it wasn’t what Virgil had asked him to do.

Once, he stole Virgil’s book that he kept at his bedside table, “*The Architect of Justice*” it was called. It was an important book to Virgil not only because it was given to him by Aristotle and contained many of the questions he used to ask his men, it was where he hid an armband that was given to him by his wife.

When Virgil found the book gone he was enraged, and Virgil was not a man to often be enraged. He ordered all of his men to look for the book and it was found that the odd man had stolen it. The man said,

“I have been thinking about reading for a long time, and I found your book interesting, I hear it contains a lot of interesting questions, I wanted to see it for myself.”

Virgil said, “do you not know, that it is not your property and hence not yours to take?”

The man said, “I did not know it was so important to you. I thought, oh, let me borrow this and take a look, I will give it back later, or not, if you didn’t notice.”

Virgil said, “you do not know it is important to me, because you are only seeing things from your perspective. Speak, soldier, you have been in this army for three years now, I have tried to teach you things, I have *Advocated* for you, but you have been resistant. You do not respond when I ask you questions in our sessions, you are only singing. Tell me, why are you in this army and what do you wish to get out of it?”

The man said, “I am in this army because the Holy Roman Emperor chose me to be in this army, I do not wish anything except to do my part. My commander, you think people could grow and learn, you want to make them grow and learn, that is noble indeed, you want to make them better men not for war but for life, that is just

indeed, but I have come to understand that there are certain things about a person they cannot change, it's for better or worse, but that's how it is. And any attempt to change that is in itself a sort of injustice."

"You wish to get out of the army," said Virgil.

"I know that applies for you too," said the man.

"Swear, soldier, swear by God what you just said, and I will grant you your freedom," said Virgil.

"I swear by God and God swore by two things in which he can never lie," said the man.

"Very well, you are free."

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After Aristotle had pondered these four stories, it was spring. One morning he woke up to find a letter waiting for him. It was from his friend Henry. It read:

Dear friend,

It is of great sorrow to have once again been of long absense. I feel, that I am causing you nothing but grief. However, know that I think of you and that in a fortnight I will be once again setting sail for Kos, meaning that in three fortnights I will arrive. I look with longing and a sense of peace, if you will have me again.

Henry

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Henry was a friend Aristotle had met during a sailing course, many years ago. He had been very enthusiastic about sailing and told of his plans to sail to the west, to South America, to see the penguins in Patagonia. Aristotle had told him that he just wants to sail around the Aegean Sea, and explore more islands. Aristotle asked Henry what motivates him, because his enthusiasm gave him a cheerful nature that made Aristotle happy too. It was like a breath of fresh air. Henry had said something like, "oh I don't know, there's some beauty to it all, the sea and ocean makes one feel small, but not in the negative sense when someone says you feel small, but rather in a very positive way. You think that the sea and ocean are the same from day to day, it's just waves, more waves, but that's not it. You are faced with so many situations and you are self-sufficient, you handle it, and then when it's calm, you lie there, you think, I have seen what most people in this world have not seen. And then you arrive at the land you set sail for, it's also new for you to explore. You ask, what's different from the land over there to the land over here? I can't tell you, you got to see it for yourself. It's just forests, more forests, grass, plains, but

it's not. Every single blade of grass is different from its neighbor. As I said, there's beauty in that." Aristotle had thought to himself, "I'd like to have Henry at my garden and ponder questions together.." so he told that to Henry.

Henry had said, "wait what, you have a whole mansion to yourself and a garden with 12 sections, where you... go and ponder questions?"

Aristotle had said, "yes, does that not sound like a good life?"

Henry had agreed to visit, and he did the year after. He came with his boat, docked at Kos and wandered the 20km to Aristotle's mansion. Henry was stunned by the mansion and its gardens, and also all the books inside the mansion's many rooms. Aristotle had said these were books written by people around here, and given one to Henry, because Henry was going back to sail to Patagonia after a short stay, and Aristotle thought the book would protect him. It was called "*Widerstehe doch der Sünde*" by John Eliot Gardiner. Aristotle had wanted Henry to stay, but since he thought Henry wanted to sail the seas, he said to his friend, "I want you to be happy and carefree, so I have no protest when you say you want to Go West."

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When Aristotle got the letter, he thought, "I will go greet Henry at the dock." So he put on his hiking boots and walked the 20km to the dock. Henry didn't really specify which date or hour he would arrive, so Aristotle came in good time and waited. He had with him camping material, and camped there for two nights. On the third day, he saw a small dot appear at the horizon that grew bigger and bigger. He could start to make out the silhouette of a boat. Then after another fifteen minutes, he could make out the features of a man on the boat. The man had medium long hair, brown, a beige linen shirt folded up at the arms and dark linen trousers. The clothes fluttered in the wind. The man raised an arm and started waving. Aristotle still couldn't see his face, but he started waving too.

After Henry had anchored his boat, they made their way back on the 20km trail again. It was a long walk, so they had time to talk and catch up.

After about 8km, Aristotle asked, "Do you remember what we talked about four years ago? About wanting for someone what one thinks good, for their sake and not for one's own, and being inclined, so far as one can, to do such things for them."

Henry answered, "yes, I do."

Aristotle continued, "I think I have been naïve. I'd like to make an amend on that, because I have come to understand, that one cannot know what is good for another person. One can put oneself in the other's shoes all one can, and that would give you some idea, but not the whole. There are things you don't know."

Henry asked, "so how do you propose to make an amend?"

"The addition, to wanting for someone what one thinks good, of utmost importance is both the genuine wish to and the action to understand the other. Without understanding, one cannot truly wish another well, one can only want for that person what oneself thinks good, not what the other thinks is good."

"You mean, to treat the other how they want to be treated, not the cliché to treat the other how you want to be treated."

"Yes, precisely."

"But for that, one also has to put oneself in another's shoes, don't you? Understanding requires empathy, because words are limited."

"Quite right, that too."

"Aristotle, I've been thinking, this time when I set sail for Kos, I wanted to stay for a longer time."

"A longer time?"

"Yes, the life at sea has made me weary. Waves go up and down, the boat rocks, I get seasick, the food is dreary. Everyday I wake up, sights on my next destination, but my mind is a blank really. Only at night, do I feel some hint of what I used to feel, when I look up at the sky and see stars."

"You went sailing to see the stars."

"I don't know if that's what I went for. I was looking for something, but I havn't found it."

"And my questions, you do not feel pestered by them? This, Henry, is after all what I do all day. Go around asking hard questions and trying to live my life in accordance to what comes to me. Maybe it's the same as you, you are looking for your answers at sea, in stars, I am looking for my answers in my gardens, my plants, my flowers, my stories, my questions."

"I do think it is quite alike as you say, Aristotle. But I think mostly, I need someplace that feels like home."

“... Henry, you are very welcome to stay again, if you think you can find what you are looking for, in all of this. I have lived here for fifteen years and I don't plan on going anywhere. For all I know, I can spend the rest of my life asking questions regardless of if I find the answer. Let me take you to your room then.”

“You still have that room for me?”

“Well, I've always seen it as your room, for when you visit.. but yes, it's the same old room, with that wallpaper in that style you liked. You picked it, remember? We had it put up, and you were exalted and said we had to celebrate. Then you started talking about all that stuff with the dust, remember?”

“We are all dust. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return,” said Henry.

“Yes. That's it. That's what you said that time. That might well be, sounds all right to me, I remember agreeing to it, but there is one thing I have thought about and that is that there is something about this dust that I don't appreciate. It's the feeling of *being* dust. The feeling of not really existing. See right through me, will you? Say what you might, but I know that I am. I am a human being. Human beings are greater than just the dust it comes from and goes back to when we die. We have a soul. We have flesh. We have feelings. We have consciousness. We have *virtues*. I would refuse to be just 'dust'. I exist. After I die, one can treat me as dirt, but when I am alive, I do want to be treated like a human being,” said Aristotle.

“There is no one that objects to that, my dear,” said Henry.

Beichen Chen
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