

# On Covid19 And Ruthlessly Taking The Measure Of Our Values (New York Times Article by Stephen Greenblatt)

Post by "Cassius" of March 17, 2020 at 9:01 AM

Also, the opening of Book 6: "**THAT THE RULES OF RIGHT REASON MAY KEEP THESE EVILS AT THE GREATEST DISTANCE FROM US:**"

"And therefore he purged the mind by true philosophy, and set bounds to our desires and our fears. He laid open to us the chief good, that point of happiness we all aim at, in what it consists, and showed us the direct way that leads to it, and puts us into the straight road to obtain it. He taught what misfortunes commonly attend human life, whether they flow from the laws of nature or from chance, whether from necessity or by accident; and by what means we are to oppose those evils, and strive against them. And he has fully proved that men torment themselves in vain, and are tossed about in a tempestuous ocean of cares to no purpose.

For as boys tremble and fear every thing in the dark night, so we in open day fear things as vain, and little to be dreaded, as those that children quake at in the dark. and fancy advancing towards them. This terror of the mind, this darkness then, not the Sun's beams, nor the bright rays of day can ever scatter, but the Light of Nature and the Rules of Reason; and therefore I shall the more readily proceed to execute what I have begun.

And since I taught the fabric of the world was mortal, and that the heavens are formed of corruptible seeds, and whatever they do, or ever will contain, must necessarily be dissolved; attend now to what remains, especially since the hope of carrying the prize has encouraged me to ascend the chariot, and engage in so noble a race; and since the difficulties that once attended the course are removed, and the roughness of the way is made favorable and easy.

The various wonders men behold in the Earth and in the heavens perplex their minds, trembling and in suspense, and make them humble with the fear of the gods, and press them groveling to the ground; and being ignorant of the cause of these events, they are forced to confess the sovereignty and give up everything, to the command of these deities. And the effects they are unable to account for by Reason they imagine were brought about by the influence of the gods. For [even those] such as well know that the gods lead a life of tranquility and ease - if they should still wonder by what power the world is carried on, especially in the things they see over their heads in the heavens above - relapse again into their old superstition. They raise over themselves a set of cruel Tyrants, because they know nothing of what can or what cannot be, or by what means a finite power is fixed to every being, and a boundary immovable which it cannot pass.

Such [people] are more liable to mistakes, and to be carried wildly from the right way.

Unless you purge your mind of such conceits, and banish them from your breast, and forbear to think unworthily of the gods, by charging them with things that break their peace, those sacred deities you will believe are always angry and offended with you; not that the supreme power of the gods can be so ruffled as to be eager to punish severely in their resentments, but because you fancy those beings, who enjoy a perfect peace in themselves, are subject to anger and the extravagances of revenge: and therefore you will no more approach their shrines with an easy mind, no more in tranquility and peace will you be able to receive the images, the representations of their divine forms, that form from their pure bodies and strike powerfully upon the minds of men: From hence you may collect what a wretched life you are to lead.

That the rules therefore of Right Reason may keep these evils at the greatest distance from us, though I have offered many things upon this subject before, yet much remains to be observed, which I shall adorn with smoothest verse....