

# VETERIBUS COMITANTIBUS

*In the Company of the Ancients*

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01

## Plato's *Timaeus* 28b7-29a6

Now the whole Heaven, or Cosmos, or if there is any other name which it specially prefers, by that let us call it,—so, be its name what it may, we must first investigate concerning it that primary question which has to be investigated at the outset in every case,—namely, whether it has existed always, having no beginning of generation, or whether it has come into existence, having begun from some beginning. It has come into existence; for it is visible and tangible and possessed of a body; and all such things are sensible, and things sensible, being apprehensible by opinion with the aid of sensation, come into existence, as we saw,<sup>1</sup> and are generated. And that which has come into existence must necessarily, as we say, have come into existence by reason of some Cause. Now to discover the Maker and Father of this Universe were a task indeed; and having discovered Him, to declare Him unto all men were a thing impossible. However, let us return and inquire further concerning the Cosmos,—after which of the Models did its Architect construct it? Was it after that which is self-identical and uniform, or after that which has come into existence; Now if so be that this Cosmos is beautiful and its Constructor good, it is plain that he fixed his gaze on the Eternal; but if otherwise (which is an impious supposition), his gaze was on that which has come into existence. But it is clear to everyone that his gaze was on the Eternal; for the Cosmos is the fairest of all that has come into existence, and He the best of all the Causes.

So having in this wise come into existence, it has been constructed after the pattern of that which is apprehensible by reason and thought and is self-identical.

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02

Vergil's Aeneid IV:1-23; 55-62; 68-73

Now though, the queen, long since pierced through by her terrible anguish,

Nurtures the wound with her veins. Passion's blind fire feeds on the harvest.

Images course through her mind: of his courage, his family distinction.

Each word he's spoken is fixed in her heart, each facial expression.

Anguish grants no peaceful repose, no respite for tired limbs.

Next day's Dawn had dismissed sky's dew-dank dark, and was shining

Earth with Apollo's lantern, when Dido, her sanity fading,

Came to what was her soul's other self, in a manner, her sister:

"Anna, my sister, what sleepless dreams suspend me in terror!

Who is this newcomer guest who has set up his quarters in our home?

Oh what a grand look he has, how brave in his heart and in battle!

Gods generated his line; I believe this, not simply in blind faith.

Base-born, degenerate souls are exposed by their fear. What a beating

Destiny gave him! What wearying wars sang out in his story!

Were it not rooted, immovably fixed in my mind, that I'd never

So much as wish to ally myself with another in marriage,

After my first great love deceived me and failed me by dying,  
Were I not weary of weddings, my thoughts about marriage so altered,  
I, perhaps, could rest easily with this – one point of censure.

Anna, I have to confess: ever since my poor husband Sychaeus  
Died and my brother stained our household's shrines with his slaughter,  
This is the one man who's supplanted my senses and pummelled my  
fainting  
Mind's resolution. [...]

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Anna fed hope to a hesitant mind, severed chastity's moorings.  
Off to shrines they went first, these two, and from altar to altar  
Searched out omens of peace; they selected and ritually slaughtered  
Hoggets for Ceres the lawgiver, Phoebus, and father Lyaeus,  
And above all, for the power that controls all marriages: Juno.  
Loveliest Dido herself, in her own right hand, hold the goblet,  
Pouring the contents between the two horns of a gleaming white heifer.  
Sometimes she paces, before heaven's eyes, to the rich smoke of altars.

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Dido, unfulfilled, burns on, and in raving obsession  
Randomly wanders the town, like a deer pierced through by an arrow  
Hit long range, when off guard, in the Cretan woods, by a shepherd  
Armed for the hunt. He has left his steel-tipped shaft in her body,  
Not knowing he's hit his mark. In her flight, she ranges all Dicté's  
Meadows and woods. Barbed deep in her haunch is the reed that will  
kill her.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* III:c260-315

{Juno} was grieved by the fact that Semele was pregnant, with the seed of mighty Jove. Swallowing words of reproach, she said 'What, in truth, have I gained from frequent reproaches? I must attack her. If I am rightly to be called most powerful Juno, if it is right for me to hold the jewelled sceptre in my hand, if I am queen, and sister and wife of Jove, sister at least, then it is her I must destroy. Yet I think she is content with her secret, and the injury to my marriage will be brief. But she has conceived – and that damages me – and makes her crime visible in her swollen belly, and wants, what I have barely achieved, to be confirmed as the mother of Jupiter's child, so great is her faith in her beauty. I will render that faith hollow. I am not Saturnia if she does not plunge into the Stygian waters, overwhelmed by Jove himself.'

At this she rose from her seat and cloaked in a dark cloud she came to Semele's threshold. But before she removed the cloud she disguised herself as an old woman, ageing her hair, ploughing her skin with wrinkles, and walking with bowed legs and tottering steps. She made her voice sound old and was herself Beroë, Semele's Epidaurian nurse. So, when they came to Jupiter's name, in the midst of their lengthy gossiping, she sighed, and said 'I hope, for your sake, that it really is Jupiter, 'but I am suspicious of all that sort of thing. Many men have entered the bedrooms of chaste women in the name of the gods. It's not good enough for him merely to be Jove: he must give a proof of his love if it truly is him.

Beg him to assume all his powers before he embraces you, and be just as glorious as when Juno welcomes him on high.

With such words Juno gulled the unsuspecting daughter of Cadmus. Semele asked Jupiter for an unspecified gift. 'Choose!' said the god, 'Nothing will be refused, and, so that you may believe it more firmly, I swear it by the Stygian torrent, that is the divine conscience, the fear, and god, of all the gods.' Pleased by her misfortune, too successful, and doomed to be undone by her lover's indulgence, Semele said 'As Saturnia is used to your embrace, when you enter into the pact of Venus, give yourself to me!' The god would have stopped her lips as she spoke: but her voice had already rushed into the air.

He groans, since she cannot un-wish it or he un-swear it. So, most sorrowfully, he climbs the heights of heaven, and, with a look, gathered the trailing clouds, then added their vapours to lightning mixed with storm-winds, and thunder and fateful lightning bolts. Still, he tries to reduce his power in whatever way he can, and does not arm himself with that lightning with which he deposed hundred-handed Typhoeus: it is too savage in his grasp. There is a lighter dart to which the Cyclops's hands gave a less violent fire, a lesser anger. The gods call these his secondary weapons. Taking these he enters Agenor's house. But still Semele's mortal body could not endure the storm, and she was consumed, by the fire of her nuptial gift.

The infant Bacchus, still unfinished, is torn from the mother's womb, and (if it can be believed) is sewn into his father's thigh to complete his full term. Ino, his mother's sister reared him secretly, in infancy, and then he was given to the nymphs of Mount Nysa who hid him in their cave and fed him on milk.

**Homer's *Odyssey* X:210-251**

Within the forest glades they found the house of Circe, built of polished stone in a place of wide outlook, and round about it were mountain wolves and lions, whom Circe herself had bewitched; for she gave them evil drugs. Yet these beasts did not rush upon my men, but pranced about them fawningly, wagging their long tails. And as when hounds fawn around their master as he comes from a feast, for he ever brings them bits to soothe their temper, so about them fawned the stout-clawed wolves and lions; but they were seized with fear, as they saw the dread monsters. So they stood in the gateway of the fair-tressed goddess, and within they heard Circe singing with sweet voice, as she went to and fro before a great imperishable web, such as is the handiwork of goddesses, finely-woven and beautiful, and glorious. Then among them spoke Polites, a leader of men, dearest to me of my comrades, and trustiest: "Friends, within someone goes to and fro before a great web, singing sweetly, so that all the floor echoes; some goddess it is, or some woman. Come, let us quickly call to her." "So he spoke, and they cried aloud, and called to her. And she straightway came forth and opened the bright doors, and bade them in; and all went with her in their folly. Only Eurylochus remained behind, for he suspected that there was a snare. She brought them in and made them sit on chairs and seats, and made for them a potion of cheese and barley meal and yellow honey with Pramnian wine; but in the food she

mixed baneful drugs, that they might utterly forget their native land. Now when she had given them the potion, and they had drunk it off, then she presently smote them with her wand, and penned them in the sties. And they had the heads, and voice, and bristles, and shape of swine, but their minds remained unchanged even as before. So they were penned there weeping, and before them Circe flung mast and acorns, and the fruit of the cornel tree, to eat, such things as wallowing swine are wont to feed upon. "But Eurylochus came back straightway to the swift, black ship, to bring tidings of his comrades and their shameful doom. Not a word could he utter, for all his desire, so stricken to the heart was he with great distress, and his eyes were filled with tears, and his spirit was set on lamentation. But when we questioned him in amazement, then he told the fate of the others, his comrades.

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05

**Acts of the Apostles 28:1-10**

καὶ διασωθέντες τότε ἐπέγνωμεν ὅτι Μελίτη ἡ νῆσος καλεῖται  
οἱ τε βάρβαροι παρεῖχον οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν φιλανθρωπίαν ἡμῖν ἄ  
ψαντες γὰρ πυρὰν προσελάβοντο πάντας ἡμᾶς διὰ τὸν ὑετὸν τὸ  
ν ἐφροστώτα καὶ διὰ τὸ ψῦχος  
συστρέψαντος δὲ τοῦ Παύλου φρυγάνων τι πλῆθος καὶ ἐπιθέντο  
ς ἐπὶ τὴν πυρὰν ἔχιδνα ἀπὸ τῆς θέρμης ἐξελθοῦσα καθῆψεν τῆς  
χειρὸς αὐτοῦ

ὡς δὲ εἶδον οἱ βάρβαροι κρεμάμενον τὸ θηρίον ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἔλεγον πάντως φονεὺς ἐστὶν ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος ὃν διασωθέντα ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης ἡ δίκη ζῆν οὐκ εἶασεν

ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀποτινάξας τὸ θηρίον εἰς τὸ πῦρ ἔπαθεν οὐδὲν κακὸν οἱ δὲ προσεδόκων αὐτὸν μέλλειν πίμπρασθαι ἢ καταπίπτειν ἄφνω νεκρὸν ἐπὶ πολὺ δὲ αὐτῶν προσδοκῶντων καὶ θεωρούντων μηδὲν ἄτοπον εἰς αὐτὸν γινόμενον μεταβαλόμενοι ἔλεγον αὐτὸν εἶναι θεόν

ἐν δὲ τοῖς περὶ τὸν τόπον ἐκεῖνον ὑπῆρχεν χωρία τῷ πρώτῳ τῆς νήσου ὀνόματι Ποπλίῳ ὃς ἀναδεξάμενος ἡμᾶς τρεῖς ἡμέρας φιλοφρόνως ἐξένισεν

ἐγένετο δὲ τὸν πατέρα τοῦ Ποπλίου πυρετοῖς καὶ δυσεντερίῳ συνεχόμενον κατακεῖσθαι πρὸς ὃν ὁ Παῦλος εἰσελθὼν καὶ προσευξάμενος ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ ἰάσατο αὐτόν

τούτου δὲ γενομένου καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ ἐν τῇ νήσῳ ἔχοντες ἀσθενεῖας προσήρχοντο καὶ ἐθεραπεύοντο

οἱ καὶ πολλαῖς τιμαῖς ἐτίμησαν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀναγομένοις ἐπέθεντο τὰ πρὸς τὰς χρείας

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[28] Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup>The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold. <sup>3</sup>Paul gathered a pile of brushwood and, as he put it on the fire, a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. <sup>4</sup>When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, the goddess Justice has not allowed him to live." <sup>5</sup>But Paul shook the snake off into the fire and suffered no ill effects. <sup>6</sup>The people expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead; but after

waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god.

<sup>7</sup>There was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days. <sup>8</sup>His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. <sup>9</sup>When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. <sup>10</sup>They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed.

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06

Catullus' Poem 85

Ōdī et amō. Quārē id faciam fortasse requīris.  
Nesciō, sed fierī sentiō et excrucior.

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I hate and I love. Why do I do this, perhaps you ask.  
I know not, but I feel it happening and I am tortured.

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07

Vergil's Aeneid 4: 129-169

Golden Aurora, surging aloft, left the damp bed of Ocean.  
Out from the gates, as sun's rays rose, rode a youthful select corps,  
Then came a torrent of fine nets, snares, broad iron-tipped hunting

Javelins, troops of Massylian horse, and scent-catching dog power.  
Still in her boudoir, the queen takes time; the elite Punic nobles  
Crowd at her doorway and wait. And her steed stands waiting, but  
wildly  
Champing its froth-covered bit, quite resplendent in gold and in purple.  
Finally, she makes an entrance, attended by hosts of retainers,  
Draped in Sidonian fabric with needlework fringes, her shoulders  
Armed with a quiver of gold, hair clasped by a golden tiara,  
Cloaked in a bright purple mantle secured by a brooch-pin of pure gold.  
Clusters of Phrygian friends come along; the delighted Iulus,  
Too. But most lovely of all, outshining the others, Aeneas,  
Joins with the host as an ally and merges his troops with their column.  
He is like Apollo, deserting his wintertime home by the Lycian  
Streams of the Xanthus to visit his mother's homeland of Delos,  
Where he's the sponsor of the ritual dance. Round his altars there mingle  
Cretans, tattooed Agathyrsians, Dryopes, all celebrating.  
He strides the ridges of Cynthus above, and to pin his loose tresses,  
Twines supple branches to fashion a garland, secures them with gold  
loops  
High on his back, arrows settle. Aeneas is no less impressive,  
Riding among, yet surpassing the others and regal in splendour.  
Once they have reached high mountain terrain past the end of the  
footpaths,  
Look! Wild she-goats, dislodged from the ledges of rock at the summit,  
Leap down the ridges; and there, racing out from a different direction,

Deer run a course down the mountains and then fan out into columns  
Pounding up dust as they bound in their flight across open expanses.  
Down in the heart of the valley, the youthful Ascanius passes  
This group and that, at a gallop. He's thrilled by his horse's quick spirit,  
Prays that among these helpless herds of unchallenging livestock,  
He'll find a wild boar leaving the heights, or a tawny-backed lion.  
Meanwhile the massive rumbling of thunder begins to roil turmoil  
All through the heavens. Then follows a cloudburst of rain mixed with  
hailstones.  
Tyrian troopers and Troy's young warriors, mingling at random,  
And Venus's Dardan grandson, all hunt in fear for such scattered  
Shelter as fields offer. Now it is rivers that rush down the mountains!  
Dido and Troy's chief come down together inside the same cavern.  
Earth gives the sign that the rites have begun, as does Juno, the nuptial  
Sponsor. The torches are lightning, the shrewd sky's brilliance is  
witness,  
Hymns for the wedding are howling moans of the nymphs upon high  
peaks.  
That first day caused death, that first day began the disasters.

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08

**Vergil's Georgics IV: 453-527**

'Not for nothing does divine anger harass you:  
you atone for a heavy crime: it is Orpheus, wretched man,  
who brings this punishment on you, no less than you deserve

if the fates did not oppose it: he raves madly for his lost wife.  
She, doomed girl, running headlong along the stream,  
so as to escape you, did not see the fierce snake, that kept  
to the riverbank, in the deep grass under her feet.  
But her crowd of Dryad friends filled the mountaintops  
with their cry: the towers of Rhodope wept, and the heights  
of Pangaea, and Thrace, the warlike land of Rhesus,  
and the Getae, the Hebrus, and Orythia, Acte's child.  
Orpheus, consoling love's anguish, with his hollow lyre,  
sang of you, sweet wife, you, alone on the empty shore,  
of you as day neared, of you as day departed.  
He even entered the jaws of Taenarus, the high gates  
of Dis, and the grove dim with dark fear,  
and came to the spirits, and their dread king, and hearts  
that do not know how to soften at human prayer.  
The insubstantial shadows, and the phantoms of those without light,  
came from the lowest depths of Erebus, startled by his song,  
as many as the thousand birds that hide among the leaves,  
when Vesper, or wintry rain, drives them from the hills,  
mothers and husbands, and the bodies of noble heroes  
bereft of life, boys and unmarried girls, and young men  
placed on the pyre before their father's eyes:  
round them are the black mud and foul reeds  
of Cocytus, the vile marsh, holding them with its sluggish waters,

and Styx, confining them in its nine-fold ditches.

The House of the Dead itself was stupefied, and innermost  
Tartarus, and the Furies, with dark snakes twined in their hair,  
and Cerberus held his three mouths gaping wide,  
and the whirling of Ixion's wheel stopped in the wind.

And now, retracing his steps, he evaded all mischance,  
and Eurydice, regained, approached the upper air,  
she following behind (since Proserpine had ordained it),  
when a sudden madness seized the incautious lover,  
one to be forgiven, if the spirits knew how to forgive:  
he stopped, and forgetful, alas, on the edge of light,  
his will conquered, he looked back, now, at his Eurydice.

In that instant, all his effort was wasted, and his pact  
with the cruel tyrant was broken, and three times a crash  
was heard by the waters of Avernus. 'Orpheus,' she cried,  
'what madness has destroyed my wretched self, and you?  
See, the cruel Fates recall me, and sleep hides my swimming eyes,  
Farewell, now: I am taken, wrapped round by vast night,  
stretching out to you, alas, hands no longer yours.'

She spoke, and suddenly fled, far from his eyes,  
like smoke vanishing in thin air, and never saw him more,  
though he grasped in vain at shadows, and longed  
to speak further: nor did Charon, the ferryman of Orcus,  
let him cross the barrier of that marsh again.

What could he do? Where could he turn, twice robbed of his wife?  
With what tears could he move the spirits, with what voice  
move their powers? Cold now, she floated in the Stygian boat.  
They say he wept for seven whole months,  
beneath an airy cliff, by the waters of desolate Strymon,  
and told his tale, in the icy caves, softening the tigers' mood,  
and gathering the oak-trees to his song:  
as the nightingale grieving in the poplar's shadows  
laments the loss of her chicks, that a rough ploughman saw  
snatching them, featherless, from the nest:  
but she weeps all night, and repeats her sad song perched  
among the branches, filling the place around with mournful cries.  
No love, no wedding-song could move Orpheus's heart.  
He wandered the Northern ice, and snowy Tanais,  
and the fields that are never free of Rhipaeian frost,  
mourning his lost Eurydice, and Dis's vain gift:  
the Ciconian women, spurned by his devotion,  
tore the youth apart, in their divine rites and midnight  
Bacchic revels, and scattered him over the fields.  
Even then, when Oeagrian Hebros rolled the head onwards,  
torn from its marble neck, carrying it mid-stream,  
the voice alone, the ice-cold tongue, with ebbing breath,  
cried out: 'Eurydice, ah poor Eurydice!'  
'Eurydice' the riverbanks echoed, all along the stream.

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Cicero's *Pro Archia Poeta* 14-16

[14] For if I had not persuaded myself from my youth onwards, both by the precepts of many masters and by much reading, that there is nothing in life greatly to be desired, except praise and honour, and that while pursuing those things all tortures of the body, all dangers of death and banishment are to be considered but of small importance, I should never have exposed myself, in defence of your safety, to such numerous and arduous contests, and to these daily attacks of profligate men. But all books are full of such precepts, and all the sayings of philosophers, and all antiquity is full of precedents teaching the same lesson; but all these things would lie buried in darkness, if the light of literature and learning were not applied to them. How many images of the bravest men, carefully elaborated, have both the Greek and Latin writers bequeathed to us, not merely for us to look at and gaze upon, but also for our imitation! And I, always keeping them before my eyes as examples for my own public conduct, have endeavoured to model my mind and views by continually thinking of those excellent men.

[15] Some one will ask, "What? were those identical great men, whose virtues have been recorded in books, accomplished in all that learning which you are extolling so highly?" It is difficult to assert this of all of them; but still I know what answer I can make to that question: I admit that many men have existed of admirable disposition and virtue, who, without learning, by the almost divine instinct of their own mere nature,

have been, of their own accord, as it were, moderate and wise men. I even add this, that very often nature without learning has had more to do with leading men to credit and to virtue, than learning when not assisted by a good natural disposition. And I also contend, that when to an excellent and admirable natural disposition there is added a certain system and training of education, then from that combination arises an extraordinary perfection of character;

[16] such as is seen in that god-like man, whom our fathers saw in their time, Africanus; and in Caius Laelius and Lucius Furius, most virtuous and moderate men; and in that most excellent man, the most learned man of his time, Marcus Cato the elder; and all these men, if they had been to derive no assistance from literature in the cultivation and practice of virtue, would never have applied themselves to the study of it. Though, even if there were no such great advantage to be reaped from it, and if it were only pleasure that is sought from these studies, still I imagine you would consider it a most reasonable and liberal employment of the mind: for other occupations are not suited to every time, nor to every age or place; but these studies are the food of youth, the delight of old age; the ornament of prosperity, the refuge and comfort of adversity; a delight at home, and no hindrance abroad; they are companions by night, and in travel, and in the country.

