



**ΤΑ ΤΩΝ ΠΥΘΑΓΟΡΕΪΩΝ
Ἐπιτὰ Χρυσὰ**

The Golden Verses of Pythagoras

Translated by Nicholas Rowe, 1707

Introduction

I Hope the Reader will forgive the Liberty I have taken in Translating these Verses somewhat at large, without which it would have been almost impossible to have given any kind of Turn in English Poetry to so dry a Subject. The Sense of the Author is, I hope, no where mistaken; and if there seems in some Places to be some Additions in the English Verses to the Greek Text, they are only such as may e justify'd from Hierocles's Commentary, and deliver'd by him as the larger and explain's Sense of the Author's short Precept. I have in some few Places ventur'd to differ from the Learned Mr. Dacier's French Interpretation, as those that shall give themselves the trouble of a strict Comparison will find. How far I am in the right, is left to the Reader to determine.

The Verses

First to the Gods thy humble Homage pay;
The greatest this, and first of Laws, obey:
Perform thy Vows, observe thy plighted Troth,
And let Religion bind thee to thy Oath.
The Heroes next demand thy just regard,
Renown'd on Earth, and the Stars preferr'd,
To Light and endless Life, their Virtues sure Reward.
Due Rights perform and Honours to the Dead,
To ev'ry Wise, to ev'ry Pious Shade.
With lowly Duty to thy Parents bow,
And Grace and Favour to thy Kindred show:
For what concerns the rest of Humane kind.
Choose out the Man to Virtue best inclin'd,
Him to thy Arms receive, him to thy Bosom bind.
Possess of such a Friend, preserve him still;
Nor thwart his Counsels with thy stubborn Will
Pliant to all his Admonitions prove,

And yield to all his Offices of Love:
Him from thy Heart, so true, so justly dear,
Let no rash Word nor light Offences tear.
Bear all thou canst, still with his Failings strive,
And to the utmost still, and still forgive;
For strong Necessity alone explores
The secret Vigour of our latent Pow'rs,
Rouses and urges on the lazy Heart,
Force, to its self unknown before, t'exert.
By use thy stronger Appetites asswage,
Thy Gluttony, thy Sloth, thy Lust, thy Rage
From each dishonest Act of Shame forbear;
Of others, and thy self, alike beware.
Let Rev'ence of thy self thy Thoughts control,
And guard the sacred Temple of thy Soul.
Let Justice o'er thy Word and Deed preside,
And Reason ev'n thy meanest Actions guide:
For know that Death is Man's appointed Doom,
Know that the Day of great Account will come,
When thy past Life shall strictly be survey'd,
Each Word, each Deed be in the Balance laid,
And all the Good and all the Ill most justly be repaid.
For Wealth, the perishing, uncertain Good,
Ebbing and flowing like the sickle Flood,
That knows no sure, no fix'd abiding Place,
But wandring loves from Hand to Hand to pass;
Revolve the Getter's Joy and Loser's Pain,
And think if it be worth thy while to gain.

Of all those Sorrows that attend Mankind,
With Patience bear the Lot to thee assign'd;
Nor think it Chance, nor murmur at the Load;
For know what Man calls Fortune is from God.
In what thou may'st from Wisdom seek Relief,
And let her healing Hand assuage the Grief;
Yet still whate'er the Righteous Doom ordains,
What Cause soever multiplies thy Pains,
Let not those Pains as Ills be understood;
For God delights not to afflict the Good.

The Reas'ning Art to various Ends apply'd,
Is oft a sure, but oft an erring Guide.
Thy Judgment therefore sound and cool preserve,
Nor lightly from thy Resolution swerve;
The dazling Pomp of Words does oft deceive,
And sweet Persuasion wins the Easy to believe.

When Fools and Liars labour to persuade,
Be dumb, and let the Bablers vainly plead.

This above all, this Precept chiefly learn,
This nearly does, and first, thy self concern▪
Let not Example, let no soothing Tongue,
Prevail upon thee with a *Siren's* Song.
To do thy Soul's Immortal Essence wrong,
Of Good and Ill by Words or Deeds exprest,
Choose for thy self, and always choose the best.

Let wary Thought each Enterprize forerun,
And ponder on thy Task before begun,
Lest Folly shou'd the wretched Work deface,
And mock thy fruitless Labours with Disgrace.
Fools huddle on and always are in haste,
Act without Thought, and thoughtless Words they waste.
But, thou, in all thou dost, with early Cares
Strive to prevent at first a Fate like theirs;
That Sorrow on the End may never wait,
Nor sharp Repentance make thee Wise too late.

Beware thy meddling Hand in ought to try,
That does beyond thy reach of Knowledge lie;
But seek to know, and bend thy serious Thought
To search the profitable Knowledge out.
So Joys on Joys for ever shall increase,
Wisdom shall crown thy Labours, and shall bless
Thy Life with Pleasure, and thy End with Peace.

Nor let the Body want its Part, but share
A just Proportion of thy tender Care:
For Health and Welfare prudently provide,
And let its lawful Wants be all supply'd.
Let sober Draughts refresh, and wholsom Fare
Decaying Nature's wasted Force repair;
And sprightly Exercise the duller Spirits chear.
In all Things still which to this Care belong,
Observe this Rule, to guard thy Soul from Wrong.

By virtuous Use thy Life and Manners frame,
Manly and simply pure, and free from Blame.

Provoke not Envy's deadly Rage, but fly
The glancing Curse of her malicious Eye.

Seek not in needless Luxury to waste
Thy Wealth and Substance, with a Spendthrift's Haste;
Yet flying these, be watchful, lest thy Mind,
Prone to Extremes, an equal Danger find,
And be to sordid Avarice inclin'd.
Distant alike from each, to neither lean,
But ever keep the happy GOLDEN MEAN.

Be careful still to guard thy Soul from Wrong,
And let thy Thought prevent thy Hand and Tongue.

Let not the stealing God of Sleep surprise,
Nor creep in Slumbers on thy weary Eyes,
Ere ev'ry Action of the former Day
Strictly thou dost and righteously survey.
With Rev'rence at thy own Tribunal stand,
And answer justly to thy own Demand.
Where have I been? In what have I transgress'd?
What Good or Ill has this Day's Life express'd?
Where have I fail'd in what I ought to do?
In what to God, to Man, or to my self I owe?
Inquire severe what-e'er from first to last,

From Morning's Dawn 'till Ev'ning's Gloom, has past.
If Evil were thy Deeds, repenting mourn,
And let thy Soul with strong Remorse be torn.
If Good, the Good with Peace of Mind repay,
And to thy secret Self with Pleasure say,
Rejoice, my Heart, for all went well to-day.

These Thoughts and chiefly these thy Mind should move;
Employ thy Study, and engage thy Love.
These are the Rules which will to Virtue lead,
And teach thy Feet her heav'nly Paths to tread.
This by his Name I swear, whose sacred Lore
First to Mankind explain'd the Mystick FOUR,
Source of Eternal Nature and Almighty Pow'r.

In all thou dost first let thy Prayers ascend,
And to the Gods thy Labours first commend,
From them implore Success, and hope a prosp'rous End.
So shall thy abler Mind be taught to soar,
And Wisdom in her secret Ways explore;
To range through Heav'n above and Earth below,
Immortal Gods and mortal Men to know.
So shalt thou learn what Pow'r does all control,
What bounds the Parts, and what unites the Whole:
And rightly judge, in all this wondrous Frame,
How universal Nature is the same;
So shalt thou ne'er thy vain Affections place
On Hopes of what shall never come to pass,

Man, wretched Man, thou shalt be taught to know,
Who bears within himself the inborn Cause of Woe.
Unhappy Race! that never yet could tell,
How near their Good and Happiness they dwell.
Depriv'd of Sense, they neither hear nor see;
Fetter'd in Vice they seek not to be free,
But stupid, to their own sad Fate agree:
Like pond'rous Rolling-stones, oppress'd with Ill,
The Weight that loads 'em makes 'em roll on still,
Bereft of Choice and Freedom of the Will.
For native Strife in ev'ry Bosom reigns,
And secretly an impious War maintains:
Provoke not THIS, but let the Combat cease,
And ev'ry yielding Passion sue for Peace.

Wouldst thou, great *Jave*, thou Father of Mankind,
Reveal the *Demon* for that Task assign'd,
The wretched Race an End of Woes would find▪

And yet be bold, O Man, Divine thou art,
And of the Gods Celestial Essence Part.
Nor sacred Nature is from thee conceal'd,
But to thy Race her mystick Rules reveal'd.
These if to know thou happily attain,
Soon shalt thou perfect be in all that I ordain.
Thy wounded Soul to Health thou shalt restore,
And free from ev'ry Pain she felt before.

Abstain, I warn, from Meats unclean and foul,
So keep thy Body pure, so free thy Soul;
So rightly judge; thy Reason, so, maintain;
Reason which Heav'n did for thy Guide ordain,
Let that best Reason ever hold the Rein.

Then if this mortal Body thou forsake,
And thy glad Flight to the pure Aether take,
Among the Gods exalted shalt thou shine,
Immortal, Incorruptible, Divine:
The Tyrant Death securely shalt thou brave,
And scorn the dark Dominion of the Grave.