

BOOK I

∞ CHAPTER 1 ∞

(1) This reflection once occurred to us: How many democracies have been brought down by those who wished the governing to be done in some way other than under a democracy; how many monarchies and how many oligarchies have been overthrown by the people;¹ and how many who have tried to establish tyrannies have, some of them, been at once brought down completely, while others, if they have continued ruling for any time at all, are admired as wise and fortunate men. We thought we also observed many in their very own private households—some indeed having many servants, but others with only very few—and, nevertheless, they, the masters, were not able to keep even these few at all obedient for their use. (2) In addition to this we reflected also that cattlemen and horsemen are the rulers of cattle and horses, and that all those called keepers of animals could plausibly be believed to be the rulers of the animals in their charge. We thought we saw all these herds more willing to obey their keepers than are human beings² their rulers; for the herds go wherever their keepers direct them, they feed on whatever land their keepers drive them to, and they abstain from whatever lands their keepers turn them from. And as for such profits as arise from them, these they allow their keepers to use in whatever way they themselves wish. Nor have we ever perceived a herd uniting against its keeper, either so as not to obey or so as not to allow him to use the profits,

but herds are more harsh toward all others than they are toward those who both rule over and benefit from them; on the other hand, human beings unite against none more than against those whom they perceive attempting to rule them.

(3) Now when we considered these things, we inclined to this judgment about them: It is easier, given his nature, for a human being to rule all the other kinds of animals than to rule human beings. But when we reflected that there was Cyrus, a Persian, who acquired very many people, very many cities, and very many nations, all obedient to himself, we were thus compelled to change our mind to the view that ruling human beings does not belong among those tasks that are impossible, or even among those that are difficult, if one does it with knowledge.³ We know that Cyrus, at any rate, was willingly obeyed by some, even though they were distant from him by a journey of many days; by others, distant by a journey even of months; by others, who had never yet seen him; and by others, who knew quite well that they would never see him. Nevertheless, they were willing to submit to him, (4) for so far did he excel other kings—both those who inherited rule from their forefathers and those who acquired it through their own efforts—that the Scythian king, even though there are very many Scythians, is unable to rule any additional nation, but would be content if he could continue ruling his own nation; and so would the Thracian king with the Thracians and the Illyrian king with the Illyrians. And it is like this also with as many other nations as we hear of; at least the nations of Europe are said to be still independent and detached from each other. But Cyrus, after finding the nations in Asia in just this independent condition, set out with a little army of Persians and became the leader of the Medes, who were willing that he do so, and over the Hyrcanians, who were also willing; and he subdued the Syrians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappadocians, both the Phrygians,⁴ the Lydians, Carians, Phoenicians, and Babylonians; he came to rule the Bactrians, Indians, and Cilicians, and similarly also the Sacians, Paphlagonians, and Magadidians, and very many other nations whose names one cannot even say. He ruled also over the Greeks who were in Asia, and, going down to the sea, over the Cyprians and Egyptians.⁵ (5) He ruled these nations even though they did not speak the same language as either he himself or one another. Nevertheless, he was able to extend fear of himself to so much of the world that he

intimidated all, and no one attempted anything against him; and he was able to implant in all so great a desire of gratifying him that they always thought it proper to be governed by his judgment.⁶ He attached to himself so many nations that it would be a task even to pass through them, no matter which direction one should begin to go from his royal⁷ palace, whether toward the east, west, north, or south. (6) So on the grounds that this man was worthy of wonder,⁸ we examined who he was by birth, what his nature was, and with what education he was brought up, such that he so excelled in ruling human beings. Whatever we have learned, therefore, and think we have perceived about him, we shall try to relate.

∞ CHAPTER 2 ∞

(1) Now the father of Cyrus is said to have been Cambyses, king of the Persians; this Cambyses was of the race of the Perseidae, who were so named after Perseus.⁹ His mother is agreed to have been Mandane. This Mandane was the daughter of Astyages, who became king of the Medes. As to his nature, even now Cyrus is still described in word and song by the barbarians as having been most beautiful in form and most benevolent in soul, most eager to learn, and most ambitious,¹⁰ with the result that he endured every labor and faced every risk for the sake of being praised. (2) He is remembered, then, as having such a nature in body and soul.¹¹

He was, moreover, educated in the laws of the Persians. These laws do not seem to begin where they begin in most cities, but by caring for the common good. For most cities allow each to educate his own children however he wants, and they allow the adults themselves to live however they please; then they enjoin them not to steal or plunder, not to use violence in entering a house, not to strike whomever it is unjust to strike, not to commit adultery, not to disobey a ruler, and similarly with other such matters. If someone transgresses one of these strictures, they punish him.

(3) But the Persian laws, starting earlier, take care that the citizens will not in the first place even be such as to desire any vile or shameful deed.¹² They exercise this care in the following way: They have a

Farewell, all you present and absent friends." Having said this and shaken the right hand of each, he covered himself and thus died.

∞ CHAPTER 8 ∞

(1) Cyrus' kingship in itself bears witness that it was the most noble and greatest of those in Asia, for it was bordered on the east by the Indian Ocean,³⁸ on the north by the Black Sea, on the west by Cyprus and Egypt, toward the south by Ethiopia. Despite its size, it was governed by one judgment, that of Cyrus, and he honored and was attentive to those under him just as to his own children, and his subjects venerated Cyrus as a father. (2) When Cyrus died, however, his sons immediately fell into dissension, cities and nations immediately revolted, and everything took a turn for the worse. That what I say is true I shall teach beginning with the divine things.

I know that earlier a king and those beneath him would remain firm in their oaths, if they swore them, and would remain firm in their agreements, if they had given their right hands, even with those who had done the most extreme things. (3) If they were not of this sort and did not have a reputation of this sort, not even one person would have trusted them, just as there is now not even one person who trusts them any longer, since their impiety has become known. Thus the generals who marched upcountry with Cyrus would not have trusted [the Persian rulers] even on that occasion [if they had know of their impiety].³⁹ As it was, of course, they trusted in their former reputation, and handed themselves over, and being led up to the king, they had their heads cut off. Even many of the barbarians who joined the campaign perished, different ones having been deceived by different pledges.

(4) They are much worse now in what follows as well. Before, if someone should run risks on the king's behalf, or should make either a city or nation subordinate, or should accomplish any other noble or good thing for him, these were honored. Yet now, even if someone like Mithridates betrays his father, Ariobarzanes, and if someone like Rheomithres leaves his wife, offspring, and his friends' children as hostages in the hands of the Egyptian king, and after transgressing

the greatest oaths may seem to do something advantageous for a king, these are those who are rewarded with the greatest honors. (5) So seeing these things, everyone in Asia has been turned toward impiety and injustice, for of whatever sort those who are foremost may be, such also, for the most part, do those beneath them become. Now, of course, they have become more lawless than before in this way.⁴⁰

(6) As for money, they have become more unjust in the following way: They round up not only those who have done many injustices but now also those who have done nothing, and they compel them to pay out money without just grounds. Consequently, those who seem to have many possessions are no less afraid than those who have committed many injustices. And they do not willingly get involved with those who are stronger, nor are they confident in joining the king's army. (7) It is possible for whoever may make war on [the Persians] to range about that country, without a battle, in whatever way they wish, and this is because of their impiety concerning gods and injustice concerning men. So their judgments are in this respect altogether worse now than they were of old.

(8) That they do not even take care of their bodies as they did before I shall in its turn now explain. It was of course customary for them neither to spit nor blow their nose. They had these customs, clearly, not to be thrifty with the body's moisture, but because they wished to harden their bodies through labors and sweat. Now it still remains the case that they do not spit or blow their nose, (9) but working up a sweat is nowhere practiced. Indeed, it was previously customary for them to eat but once a day, in order that they might use the whole day for actions and hard labor. Now it still indeed remains the case that they eat but once a day: Beginning their meal with those who have breakfast as early as possible, they spend the day eating and drinking from then until such time as the latest go to bed.

(10) It was customary for them not to carry pots into their symposia, for clearly they believed that not drinking to excess would result in fewer failures of body and of judgment. Now it still remains the case that they do not carry them in, but they drink so much that instead of carrying them in, they themselves must be carried out, whenever they are no longer able to stand upright and go out.

(11) But it was traditional for them when on a march neither to eat nor to drink nor to be evident doing any of the necessary conse-

quences of both. Now, in turn, abstaining from these things still endures [when on a march]; however, they make such brief trips that no one would still wonder at their abstention from things necessary.

(12) But they used to go out hunting so often before that their hunts sufficed as exercises both for them and for their horses. When King Artaxerxes and his circle became weaker than wine, neither did they themselves similarly still go out hunting nor did they take others out hunting. But even if any others were hardworking and often went hunting with their knights, [the king and his circle] clearly envied them and hated them for being better than they were.

(13) But the children's being educated at court still endures; however, the learning and practice of horsemanship has become extinct because of there not being anywhere in which they might become well regarded by showing it. And that the children before used to hear cases being justly adjudicated and seemed to learn justice, this too has been altogether undone, for now they see clearly that whichever side bribes more wins. (14) But before the children used to learn also the powers of the plants that grew naturally from the earth, in order that they might use the helpful ones and avoid the harmful. But now it looks as though they are taught these things so they can do the most harm. In any event, nowhere more than there are so many killed or ruined because of poisonous drugs.

(15) But they are also more delicate now than in Cyrus' time. Then they still made use of the education and continence they received from the Persians, as well as the dress and the luxury of the Medes. Now they look with indifference on the extinction of the Persians' perseverance, while they conserve the Medes' softness. (16) I wish to make clear their delicacy as well. In the first place, it is not sufficient for them that their beds be softly spread: They even set the feet of their beds on carpets, so that instead of a hard floor resisting, soft carpets yield. Moreover, as for foods baked for their meals, they have not omitted anything previously discovered; rather, they are forever contriving new ones. So too with sauces, for they possess inventors of both. (17) It does not suffice for them in winter that their head, body, and feet be covered, but they also have lined sleeves and gloves for their hands and fingers. Nor indeed in summer does the shade of either trees or rocks suffice for them, but people stand by and contrive additional shade for them. (18) Moreover, if they have as many cups

as possible, they preen themselves on it. If they have contrived to get them through a manifest injustice, they are not ashamed of it, for injustice and the sordid search for gain have increased a great deal among them. (19) But it was traditional for them even before not to be seen traveling on foot, for no other reason than to become as skilled as possible in horsemanship. Now they have more blankets on their horses than on their beds, for they are not so concerned with riding as with sitting softly.

(20) As for things military, is it not likely that they are worse than before in every way? In the past, it was a tradition for the landholders to provide riders from their territory (and they, of course, went on campaign if a campaign was needed) and for only those guarding the country's advanced positions to be paid for it. Now it is doormen, cooks, saucemakers, wine pourers, bathers, waiters to bring out dishes, waiters to take them away, assistants for going to bed, assistants for getting up, and cosmeticians who apply makeup, anoint, and arrange other matters—now all these are the ones the powerful have made to be knights, that they may be their paid troops. (21) It is evident that there is a multitude of them; however, there is no military benefit from them for war. Events themselves make it clear, for enemies range about their country more easily than do friends.

(22) Cyrus, of course, stopped the practice of skirmishing at long range. Putting breastplates on both his troops and their horses, and giving one spear to each, he made the battle be hand to hand. Now they neither skirmish at a distance nor come together and do battle hand to hand. (23) The infantry have shields, swords, and scimitars, just as if they were going to do battle in Cyrus' time, but they are not willing to fight at close range either. (24) Nor do they still use the scythed chariots for the purpose for which Cyrus made them. He, by exalting the drivers with honors and making them admired, had them hurl themselves against the heavy-armed line. But the present [rulers] do not even recognize the troops mounted on their chariots, and they think that it will be all the same for themselves with drivers who do not practice as with those who have practiced. (25) They do begin to charge, but before they are in the enemy's midst, some fall out voluntarily and others jump out, so that without drivers, the teams often do more harm to friends than to enemies. (26) Since, however, they themselves know how their military affairs are, they yield;⁴¹ and none

of them will any longer enter into war without Greeks, neither when they make war on each other nor when the Greeks go on campaign against them. But they have decided to make their wars even against Greeks with Greeks.

(27) Now I think that I have accomplished what I proposed. I say that the present Persians and their associates have been demonstrated to be more impious regarding gods, more irreverent regarding relatives, more unjust regarding others, and more unmanly in what pertains to war than were their predecessors. If someone is of an opposite judgment, he will find on considering their deeds that they bear witness to my words.