



Chapter Sixteen

Patience and Practical Wisdom¹

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Simone Weil wrote that, “We do not have to understand new things, but by dint of patience, effort and method to come to understand with our whole self the truths which are evident.”² This is reminiscent of the suggestion in Plato’s *Meno* that knowledge is recollection. Although most of us would not take Plato at his word, we might charitably read him and Weil as suggesting that the solution to some problems depends not upon learning something new, but rather in understanding how to apply what we have already learned, in knowing how to look at the problem in the right way, or how to ask the right question, so that the solution—the answer, the right course of action—becomes clear. Knowing how to apply ourselves, our skills, and our experiences, is what it means to have practical wisdom. It is traditionally assumed that the virtuous person is also the practically wise person, that there is no human virtue without such wisdom. Although this view that practical wisdom is internal to the virtues has been challenged on various grounds, here I will travel close to the traditional conception while also convinced that what I offer here identifies an important relationship between patience and practical wisdom regardless of whether we construe virtues in an Aristotelian fashion or otherwise.³ On traditional accounts, we need practical wisdom in order to have virtues. On other accounts (and putting aside Driver’s alleged “virtues of ignorance”), one might say that we need practical wisdom in order to exercise our virtues at the right time and in the right way. But how, aside from the vague answers of experience, proper training, and practice is practical wisdom acquired?

Weil emphasizes patience, which is a virtue that has received little attention in contemporary moral philosophy. In the first Century, Gregory the Great described patience as “the root and guardian of all the virtues.”⁴ To lose patience is to be consumed by anger or despair, to lose a grip on oneself.



Wise judgment presupposes patient self-possession, and thus the exercise of the other virtues also depends upon the calm, attentive, and persevering guidance of patience. This means that patience is not simply a transitional virtue needed by those who are still developing other virtuous dispositions; patience remains instrumentally necessary for the continued exercise of all virtue. But its instrumentality is distinctive because it is perpetually indispensable, for it is only through patient attention to a task that one can do things rightly. For both Gregory and Weil, as Christians, it is patience that maintains the open space within the soul through which the illuminations of divine grace and wisdom might enter. However, even if we put their theological commitments aside, we can see that patience plays a significant role in the development and exercise of practical wisdom. Learning requires patience, and even if we do not think that insight is a deliverance of divine grace, it remains something for which we must at times wait.

CONCEPTIONS OF PATIENCE

We tend to associate patience quite strongly with waiting, but many traditional accounts define patience as something more than wise waiting. A touchstone for Christian thought on patience is the remark of Jesus in Luke 21:19 (King James Version): “In patience possess ye your souls.” Gregory expands upon this as follows:

We gain possession of our lives by patience, since when we learn to govern ourselves, we begin to gain possession of the very thing we are. True patience consists in bearing calmly the evils done to us by another, and in not being consumed by resentments against the person who inflicts them. A person who bears the evils done to him by his neighbor, so that he suffers them in silence, while looking for a time for suitable revenge, is not practicing patience but only displaying it. It is written that *Love is patient and kind . . .* often we appear patient because we are unable to repay evils. . . . [but] We are not looking for a patience on the surface but in the heart.⁵

For Gregory, then, it doesn't matter how patiently McCoy plots his revenge against Hatfield—a deeper kind of patience is missing that would altogether rule out his quest for revenge. Gregory's patience “in the heart” differs significantly from patience as recently defined by Joseph Kupfer, who characterizes it as, “the disposition to accept delays in satisfying our desires—delays that are warranted by circumstances or the desires themselves.”⁶ According to Kupfer, patience is an instrumental virtue and thus does not have any particular end; Kupfer's patience “can be instrumental

in attaining wicked ends as well.”⁷ For Gregory, there are some things that a patient person would not desire (such as the revenge that is a constitutive desire of anger on traditional accounts of that emotion).⁸ At the same time, we needn’t interpret this notion of “bearing calmly the evils done to us” as implying that the patient person bears them without seeking, when possible, to respond to and correct evils in a non-vengeful manner. That *would* seem to be the patient way to respond.

The conceptions of patience in Gregory and Kupfer also differ in terms of what the central feature of patience is on each account. For Gregory (and other Christian theologians, including Aquinas, whose view I discuss below), patience is a kind of endurance, a form of fortitude. Kupfer characterizes patience more narrowly, as a kind of wise and calm waiting, and it does not appear that Gregory’s patient endurance can be fully reduced to Kupfer’s patient waiting. In part, this is due to the point noted above, that Gregory’s patience rules out certain desires, but also because the person who patiently endures the wrongdoing of another person needn’t be thought of as accepting a *delay* in the satisfaction of some desire. His or her desire not to be wronged in such ways has been frustrated, perhaps, but such a frustration does not seem to be a *delay*. Nevertheless, we could take a conciliatory approach here, noting that patient endurance will often involve some kind of waiting, and that patient waiting is itself a form of patient endurance.

This link between patience and endurance creates a further link to the virtue of perseverance (or constancy). In his sixteenth Century neo-Stoic work *On Constancy*, Justus Lipsius tells us that, “the true mother of Constancy is Patience, and lowliness of mind, which is a voluntary sufferance without grudging of all things whatsoever can happen to or in a man.”⁹ Here the scope of patience is broadened to include all misfortunes and not just those suffered at the hands of others. Inspired by the ancient Stoics, Lipsius counsels patience in responding to hardships that are “not up to us”—to accept what we cannot change, even as we seek to change what we can. What else—other than losing ourselves in anger or despair—can we really do?

Looking to other traditions, the eighth century Buddhist Shantideva identifies patience as a core virtue, and patience is again identified as tolerance of real or perceived wrongdoing done to us by others. The Dalai Lama’s assistant and translator Geshe Thupten Jinpa explains that the Tibetan term *soe-pa*, which he translates as “patience,” literally means “forebearance,” and when “used to describe a quality, as in the case of a person’s character, its meaning is best understood as ‘tolerance.’” However, Jinpa notes that tolerance “does not capture the complete meaning of *soe-pa*, for it is possible for someone to have a tolerant temperament and yet be quite impatient.” This point resembles Gregory’s distinction between “patience on the surface” and patience “in the

heart.” Jinpa tells us that “a person who is ‘great in *soe-pa*’ is said to have a patient temperament.”¹⁰

In the Islamic tradition, al-Ghazālī offers a treatise expounding upon Mo-hammad’s saying that, “Patience [*al-ṣabr*] is half of faith.”¹¹ Recognizing that believers must contend with conflicts between the “religious impulse” to live rightly (in submission to Allah) and the “impulse of desire,” Al-Ghazālī characterizes patience as “the steadfastness of the religious impulse in confronting the impulse of desire.”¹² Here, patience is conceived as perseverance in seeking the good (the Divine). Unlike the other figures discussed so far, al-Ghazālī emphasizes that it is not only misfortune that calls for patience, but also *good* fortune. He cites Sahl al-Tustarī as saying that, “Patience in well-being is more difficult than patience in tribulation.”¹³ Although this may seem counterintuitive, the idea is that good fortune may tempt a person to take a moral holiday, to become lax in honoring his moral or religious commitments, and thus become “soft” in character. Thus, for al-Ghazālī, there is also a conceptual connection between patient endurance and temperance or self-control.

This brief survey indicates that patience has assumed various, though interrelated, faces. If we turn to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, we again see all of the central ideas discussed above associated with patience. The *OED* definition of patience includes the following characterizations:

- The calm, uncomplaining endurance of pain, affliction, inconvenience, etc.; the capacity for such endurance.
- Forbearance or long-suffering under provocation; esp. tolerance of the faults or limitations of other people.
- Calm, self-possessed waiting.
- Constancy or diligence in work, exertion, or effort; perseverance.

This definition highlights the relationship between patience and other capacities that are often identified as distinct virtues, such as fortitude, tolerance, and constancy or perseverance. For some purposes, we may wish to identify these virtues separately, but we may also want to note their interconnect-edness. Kupfer argues that patience is not a primitive virtue, but is “the manifestation of more basic character traits,” and so perhaps we should call the relevant virtues aspects of patience.¹⁴ If we are waiting for some pain or inconvenience to pass, then self-possessed waiting will involve fortitude. If we are waiting for others to make progress in their own moral development, or to develop some other skill or aptitude, where we play the role of teacher (or parent), then our patience will involve a kind of tolerance. Finally, when we ourselves are engaged in some activity or project which unfolds over a



significant period of time, there will be times when we have to wait for some phase of the project to reach its completion before moving to the next step, times when we must step away from the project and wait to return to it, times when we must wait in the face of a problem for the insight that will enable us again to move forward. These various demands of time, the delays, setbacks, and interruptions that may occur, as well as the demands of all of our other responsibilities, interests, and desires, which may often incline (tempt) us toward the abandonment or neglect of our project, all indicate the need for constancy or perseverance. Patience will often require that we wait calmly, but then we must also possess other capacities such as fortitude and tolerance. Instrumentally, patience enables us to wait calmly and wisely in our pursuit of particular goods—often either with or in spite of others—but insofar as patience is also the virtue by which we remain self-possessed, there is also this internal good toward which patience aims, upon which the genuinely patient person—even while practicing patience—does not have to wait.¹⁵

CONCERNS ABOUT PATIENCE

Some may contend that patience has its limitations, that it is not always a virtue to be patient. As Eamonn Callan notes (although he thinks this view is confused), patience seems to be “perilously close to a kind of weakness, and any excess provokes pity or contempt.”¹⁶ Our patient good will might be abused by others, and perhaps no one values patience in others more than a tyrant. With enough of such worries, we might be inclined to agree with Ambrose Bierce that patience is not a virtue at all, but rather, “a minor form of despair, disguised as a virtue.”¹⁷ At the very least, we might say that virtue at times manifests itself in *impatience*, as in King’s famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail”: “There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience.”¹⁸

But we might read King’s use of “impatience” as ironic, or as an acknowledgment of those who believed, if mistakenly, that King’s activism *was* impatient. Others wanted King and his fellow demonstrators to *wait*, but no one thinks that waiting itself is always virtuous. This is not only because we can be plagued by impatience even as we wait, but also because it cannot be impatient to speak out or to act when doing so is appropriate. Some will have heard patience defined as “waiting without complaint,” and thus defined, patience will not seem to be uniformly virtuous unless *complaining* is understood to be uniformly vicious. We could try to motivate that view by distinguishing appropriate protest, objection, and expressions of negative



feeling from merely useless and aggravating complaint. But the definition fails anyway because it does not capture the inner qualities of patience. An ability to quash one's desire to complain certainly shows self-control, but the genuinely patient person will not feel the desire to complain. Again, however, this needn't imply that the patient person does or says nothing at all. Here, we might distinguish between pointless or useless complaining and wise complaint (or objection), and also notice that in situations of injustice what is needed is often more than mere complaint, but positive action. Indeed, when the various aspects of patience above are taken into account, it appears that in addition to courage, those who worked and walked with King would have needed patience in the broadened sense. In particular, the principles that guided King's method—taking non-violent direct action when necessary, but doing so “openly, lovingly, and with a willingness to accept the penalty”—calls for great patience of endurance and perseverance. King's “impatience” with injustice is in that respect not incompatible with Gregory's “patience in the heart.”

Thus, we also can sympathize with Nietzsche's suspicion that the ideal of patience is easily distorted so as to give cover to vice and weakness: “The inoffensiveness of the weak man, even the cowardice of which he has so much, his lingering at the door, his being ineluctably compelled to wait, here acquire flattering names, such as ‘patience,’ and are even called virtue itself.”¹⁹ Of course, the distortion of a virtue is not a virtue, and we have no reason to think that patience is especially prone to such abuse and deformation.²⁰ The persuasive tyrant can also convince soldiers to sacrifice their lives (and the lives of others) for both petty and monstrous causes by appealing to their desire to be courageous. Patience is no more or less close to a kind of weakness than courage is to rashness.

Still, we sometimes inform (warn?) others that we have run out of patience with them or that we are losing (or have lost) our patience with them. We also say things like, “I am angry with you!” Most people seem to think that anger is justified at times, and similarly, that even if patience is usually a virtue, there is a limit to how patient we ought to be in any given circumstance. The suggestion that patience is *always* a virtue seems to conflict with our ordinary use of the concept, and this implies that the ordinary use of the term is often ethically neutral—whether it is virtuous to be in a patient state of mind and to act accordingly depends upon the circumstances. The question then is whether it is *wise*, given the circumstances, to be or to remain patient. Is the disagreement between this ordinary conception of patience and those who imply that patience is an unequivocal virtue a substantive disagreement or a merely verbal one? In some cases, the disagreement is perhaps substantive. This will be true at least in those cases where the disagreement is also over

whether anger is ever appropriate, as in Seneca's Stoic critique of Aristotle on anger.²¹ But in many cases the disagreement may be merely verbal. Often, when we have "run out of patience," we are simply judging that it is no longer wise to wait for something or on someone, or that we should no longer put up with someone's bad behavior. Those who regard patience always as a virtue needn't disagree that waiting beyond a certain point, passively tolerating certain behaviors without intervention, or persevering in a lost cause, is unwise. From that perspective, one would not describe Vladimir and Estragon, in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, as patient, but rather quite simply as fools. At any rate, they aren't particularly patient even as they wait for Godot.

Some people might have a naturally patient disposition, in the ordinary manner of speaking. (I am not one of them.) It is true that such people, although blessed with a "natural virtue," would be at risk of over-waiting, suffering fools without appropriately responding, and so forth, if their natural disposition is not itself regulated by what Aristotle calls practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Only the latter sort of patience would be unequivocally virtuous, since merely natural patience that is unmodified by practical wisdom will sometimes get things wrong. People might disagree about how long it is wise to wait for certain things, what can be tolerated of others (without intervention or response), and to what extent we should persevere in certain tasks before judging it better to give up and to try something else. The question needn't be whether or not it is wise to be patient, but instead what a *wise patience* requires of us in the particular circumstances. Patience that is foolish, self-denigrating, and unwise will be akin to seemingly courageous acts that are more aptly described as rash or foolhardy. Both sorts of acts are to be avoided, whatever we name them.²²

PATIENCE IN RELATION TO OTHER VIRTUES

In any particular situation, we might wonder how much more waiting, forbearance, endurance, or perseverance is warranted. Of course, there can be no very substantive generic answer to a contextual question. But one general answer we might give is that patient self-possession will always have a point as long as there is something worth doing with and in one's life. Or we might say: patience will remain valuable for as long as there are other virtues we can exercise in life that will be supported or further developed by our continued patience. To illustrate this contribution of patience to the other virtues, let us briefly consider it in relation to courage, justice, and love.

In *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*, Kierkegaard asks, "Is patience not precisely that courage which voluntarily accepts unavoidable suffering? The

unavoidable is just the thing which will shatter courage.”²³ We distinguish the courageous person from the coward by noting that the courageous person does not flee from danger that ought to be faced. Kierkegaard reminds us that some kinds of adversity are inescapable, and fleeing (at least physical fleeing) is thus not an option. We can thus either accept this adversity, in the sense that we endure it as best we can, or we can surrender to despair, or explode in futile anger. Although courage and patience seem to travel in different directions, with courage a virtue of action and patience a virtue of restraint, when courage is understood as fortitude, then their relationship appears less oppositional.²⁴ Patient endurance is itself a kind of fortitude, and patience of this sort is crucial to the more active forms of courage in at least two respects. The first is that courageous actions often unfold over time: a person who possesses what Tim O’Brien calls the “courage of the charge” will not necessarily possess the “wise endurance” needed to sustain action on a battlefield over time.²⁵ To *complete* a temporally extended courageous action will typically require some capacity for endurance of the unavoidable dangers and other adversities that are part of the situation. Second, patience understood as a form of restraint, of waiting, also contributes to courage, and helps in distinguishing courageous action from rash action. We might say that the difference between courageous and rash individuals (or actions) has to do with the presence or absence of practical wisdom—a rash action is an unwise action—but patience may make it more likely that a person is able to judge wisely in a dangerous situation and to choose the right moment in which to take action.²⁶

Similar connections can be made between patience and justice. Like courageous action, just action requires good judgment, and specifically, justice involves properly impartial judgment. Arriving at a just judgment may also require patience in various ways. It may be necessary to wait until one has surveyed all of the relevant details of a case, resisting the temptation to come to a hasty conclusion. In particular, we may be tempted to judge or act impatiently when we are angry. Stoics and Aristotelians will disagree about whether anger itself can ever be virtuous, but no one would disagree with the general point that anger is often dangerous, can cloud judgment, causes great damage in relationships, and motivates undue and excessively harsh punishments.²⁷ Taking the impartial step back from a situation, especially when one’s own interests are involved and when one feels wronged, will take significant patience.

These considerations suggest that a general feature of patience is that it supports discernment and the exercise of practical wisdom, protecting us from the interference of anger and other forms of impatience. In other words, patience enables *attention* in difficult circumstances. Circumstances can be

difficult because of external factors, because of what others are doing or have done, and also due to internal factors, our preconceptions, preoccupations, expectations, and the busyness of our own minds. *Love* requires attention that can cut through the obstacles that we ourselves create and which make it difficult to make ourselves properly available to the other. Here, I follow Simone Weil, who says that attention should not be “confused with a kind of muscular effort” or straining, but must instead be understood as, “suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by the object.”²⁸ This means: putting aside our preconceptions, preoccupations, and so on, so that the other may speak to us and that we may hear fully what the other has to say. Weil says that, “To love purely is to consent to distance, it is to adore the distance between ourselves and that which we love.”²⁹ Pure love is attentive and accepting of difference, rather than possessive and imposing.³⁰ The idea that “love is patient,” understood in this light, hardly means that love simply puts up with all of the beloved’s nonsense, but rather, and more fundamentally, that love involves waiting *upon* the other—serving the other—and not just waiting *for* the other to match one’s own agenda and pace. This kind of patience involves something more than “accepting delays in satisfying our desires,” since patient love for the other may involve making significant changes to our own desires, and also giving priority to the desires, and especially the needs, of those we love and those who would be well-served by our love.

PATIENCE AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Aquinas follows Gregory and Augustine in defining patience as the calm endurance of evils and misfortune, but argues that patience is not one of the “greatest” virtues, even as he acknowledges Gregory’s remark that patience is the “root and guardian of all the virtues.” The reason is that patience is less directly oriented toward good than virtues such as courage, justice, and the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity). Patience prevents us from being consumed by anger or despair—it provides “a check on things that withdraw man from good”—but is thereby less directly involved in positively good action. Aquinas glosses Gregory’s claim thus: “Patience is said to be the root and safeguard of all the virtues, not as though it caused and preserved them directly, but merely because it removes their obstacles.”³¹

Aquinas acknowledges that an inability to bear patiently with hardship makes it immensely difficult, if not impossible, to exercise the virtues of justice, courage, and love. This would imply that in the exercise of such virtues, patience is also at work, albeit in a way that is, so to speak, behind

the scenes: patient attention and effort guides and improves our efforts to be courageous, just, and loving. Thus, where we are successful in the cultivation and exercise of these other virtues, it may well be that some credit is also owed to patience, or that in learning to develop these other virtues, we are also learning to be patient.

That patience is integral to moral development and growth (in broad rather than narrow terms) may be seen more clearly by considering the role of patience in the context of a specific role (or practice). Take the case of teaching. In teaching, of course, we must often wait upon students to master content or skills, correct errors, and adopt a pace which corresponds to the capabilities of our students (while at the same time presenting challenges to the students that encourage their own growth). When what we teach goes beyond the delivery of content and involves an education in skills such as critical thinking and reading, or the conducting of fieldwork or experiments, we must often model these skills to our students, and in doing so we model patient attention to a particular task.³² In many cases, we must find ways to guide our students into an ability to dwell within the task—to take their time, to be present in the task, rather than to rush through the motions or to do it distractedly, smart-phone in hand. Here, one of Nietzsche's most positive remarks on patience (which some might find surprising) helps to illustrate the role of patience as an intellectual virtue (and not just as an ally to moral virtues):

People must learn to *see*, they must learn to *think*, they must learn to *speak* and to *write*: the goal in all three cases is a noble culture.—Learning to *see*—getting your eyes used to calm, to patience, to letting things come to you; postponing judgment, learning to encompass and take stock of an individual case from all sides. This is the *first* preliminary schooling for spirituality: *not* to react immediately to a stimulus, but instead to take control of the inhibiting, excluding instincts.³³

Nietzsche's emphasis on patience as a kind of holding back is strikingly similar to Weil's discussion of attention. In both cases, patience creates room for a more informed judgment and presumably also for discoveries and insights that are not available to those who rush their work or do it in a distracted state of mind.

To the extent that we are patient teachers, we guide students into this kind of investment in their own efforts, in part, by example.³⁴ A point to stress here is that patience in a task is not merely the ability to wait for the task to reach its completion—that is to leave oneself, as the performer of the task, too much out of the picture. To be *present* in the task involves the kind of self-possession manifest in patience; by contrast, impatience (as well as passive indifference) is often a sign of distraction, and thus of absence from the present task. We wait, then, not merely to have our desires satisfied, but



rather because a proper understanding of the demands of the task leads us to accept that in roles such as teaching, waiting—as well as the other aspects of patience—is part of the task. In this respect, we cannot aspire to be a good teacher without aspiring to be a patient teacher. As students, we may not be able to appreciate the goods that flow from the excellent performance of the activity unless we learn how to apply our patience to it. The need for patience is internal to the task (or activity) and our desire to participate in it with excellence. In the absence of patient self-possession, we fail to be present to the tasks through which we cultivate and exercise the other virtues.³⁵

NOTES

1. This chapter draws on ideas that I have gone on to develop in further detail in several different chapters of my book *On Patience* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016).

2. Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr (London: Routledge, 2002), 116.

3. For challenges to the Aristotelian approach on which practical wisdom is an internal feature of virtues, see Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

4. Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia XXXV*; in *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. D. Hurst (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 305.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Joseph H. Kupfer, “When Waiting Is Weightless: The Virtue of Patience,” *Journal of Value Inquiry* 41 (2007), 265.

7. Kupfer, “When Waiting,” 277.

8. On anger and revenge, see Martha Nussbaum, “Transitional Anger,” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, no. 1 (2015): 41–56.

9. Justus Lipsius, *On Constancy*, ed. John Sellars, trans. John Stradling (Exeter: Bristol Phoenix Press, 2006), 37.

10. The Dalai Lama, *Healing Anger: The Power of Patience from a Buddhist Perspective*, trans. Geshe Thupten Jinpa (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1997), xv. This book is a discourse on the chapter on patience from Shantideva’s *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*.

11. Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *On Patience and Thankfulness* (Book XXXII of *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*), trans. H. T. Littlejohn (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2011), 8.

12. al-Ghazālī, *On Patience and Thankfulness*, 15.

13. al-Ghazālī, *On Patience and Thankfulness*, 33.

14. Kupfer, “When Waiting,” 278.

15. This internal significance of patience is stressed by Søren Kierkegaard, “To Gain One’s Soul in Patience,” in *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 159–76.



16. Eamonn Callan, "Patience and Courage," *Philosophy* 68 (1993): 523.
17. Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary* [1911], <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/972/972-h/972-h.htm>.
18. Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," April 1963, 3, http://kingencyclopedia.stanford.edu/kingweb/popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf.
19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, §14, in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 47. For more on Nietzsche's views about patience, see my "Nietzschean Patience," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 50, no. 1 (2016): 14152, doi: 10.1007/s10790-015-9503-z.
20. On this point, see also Callan, "Patience and Courage," and Glen Pettigrove, "Meekness and 'Moral Anger,'" *Ethics* 122, no. 2 (2012): 341–70.
21. See Seneca, "On Anger," in *Anger, Mercy, and Revenge*, trans. R. A. Kaster and M. Nussbaum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 14–97; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV, Chapter 5. However, even here, it is difficult to adjudicate between Aristotle and Seneca because their theoretical conceptions of the emotions are somewhat different, and although the Stoics condemn emotions such as anger, they allow that certain *feelings* (the *eupatheiai*) are experienced even by the sage. Also, the precursory impressions that give rise to anger and other emotions (the *propatheiai*) might include what we would regard as "angry feelings." For the Stoic, these impressions are not themselves anger; we become angry, in the strict sense, if we respond to these impressions in the wrong way. See my article, "In Defense of Patience," in *Epicurus: His Continuing Influence and Contemporary Relevance*, ed. Dane Gordon and David Suits (Rochester, NY: RIT Press, 2014), 89–104.
22. A further question or concern we might have about patience is whether it always serves good ends. Earlier I noted that Gregory's "patience in the heart" seems to oppose what he regards as the patience of the person who calmly waits for an opportunity to get his or her revenge. We might similarly imagine that patience will be instrumentally valuable to thieves and serial killers, and similar questions will arise about courage. Gregory (as well as other figures considered in this chapter) would not regard this kind of patience as "true patience," because the desired ends conflict with moral virtue in general. Nevertheless, it seems that we often do use the term patience in this thinner sense, to describe a particular state of mind and action, regardless of the end being pursued. This differs from the worry about whether patience is sometimes weakness insofar as the problem there is a failure to pursue a good end, while the sorts of cases just described involved, as it seems, patiently pursuing a vicious end. Similar worries arise about other virtues; in the case of courage we might ask whether it is appropriate to describe an ignoble end pursued or attained under great danger as a courageous act. Although classical philosophers and theologians insisted upon only describing as virtuous (patient, courageous, etc.) actions that themselves accord with the good, contemporary thinkers seem divided on the question, some preferring to use the virtue terms in a less morally thick manner. My own inclination is to take the old-fashioned approach on such issues, but one could also say that if a person is deficient in other virtues, then his or her actions, even when supported by other virtues, may

not be, on the whole, morally good. Of course, those who subscribe to a strong unity of the virtues thesis (if anyone does) will claim that if a person is deficient in one virtue, then he or she cannot possess any other virtues. The rest of us will just have to allow that the possession of any particular virtue, to a greater or lesser degree, will not guarantee right action in any given situation.

23. Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of Heart Is to Will One Thing*, trans. Douglas V. Steere (New York: Harper, 1956), 173. In Danish, the term for *courage* (*tålmod*) contains in its root the term *tåle* which can be translated as *to be patient* but which also means *to tolerate* or *endure*.

24. Callan stresses this point in “Patience and Courage.”

25. Tim O’Brien, *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973).

26. This is also the kind of patience that athletes are often praised for exhibiting on the field or the court.

27. See note 15. See also the Buddhist sources in note 6, as well as Robert Thurman, *Anger* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

28. Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God,” in *Waiting for God*, trans. Emma Crawford (New York: Harper, 2009), 60–62.

29. Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 65.

30. This is congruent with Troy Jollimore’s characterization of love as a “moral way of seeing,” in *Love’s Vision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 26.

31. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II.2.136, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3136.htm>.

32. Compare this point about attention to Christopher Cordner’s remark, drawing from Keats: “The ‘chameleon poet’ waits for otherness to come upon her, receptive to taking on its colour and pattern. This receptiveness to the world is literally a form of patience.” Christopher Cordner, “Waiting Patience and Love,” in *Waiting*, ed. Ghasan Hage (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2009), 170.

33. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Antichrist, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), “What the Germans Lack,” §6.

34. On this point, see Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Education,” in *Lectures and Biographical Sketches* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1893), <https://archive.org/details/lecturesbiograph00emer>.

35. Portions of this chapter were originally presented between November 2012 and April 2013 at meetings of the Tennessee Philosophical Association, the Indiana Philosophical Association, the Kentucky Philosophical Association, and at the 39th Conference on Value Inquiry at Western Kentucky University. I am indebted to the audiences and commentators at those meetings for their comments, questions, and suggestions, especially Ben Bryan, Trevor Hedberg, W. David Hall, and Susan Purviance (who first brought Justus Lipsius’s work to my attention). I must also thank Duncan Richter and my EKU colleagues Ron Messerich and Mike Austin for their frequent, and patient, conversation (online and in person) about many of the issues explored in this chapter.

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