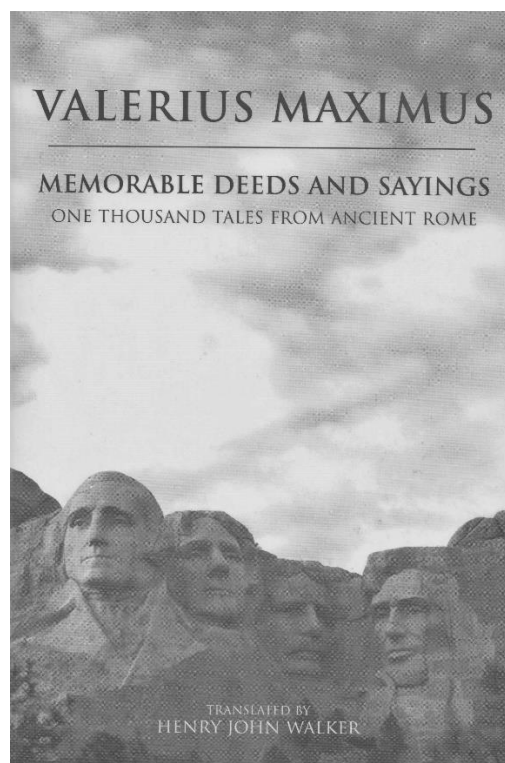


# *BELLARIA LV*



Some editions of Valerius Maximus, very popular in the Middle Ages, from 1527-1726

## Valerius Maximus V



### *FACTORUM ET DICTORUM MEMORABILIVM LIBRI IX*

At the end of this series I repeat my thanks to Harry Walker for allowing me to use his fine translation of Valerius.

#### Introduction

It is possible to make a number of generalisations from Valerius about the ethical values and beliefs that underpin Roman life.

While gods exhibit a sense of justice and good faith, omens and prodigies are less reliable, though prayer is important, expressing a faith in divine benevolence. Acting in accordance with nature is often seen as beneficial, as if there is a sort of divinely-sanctioned world order of which humanity is a part. But set strongly against all this is *Fortuna*, which is altogether less predictable, though it can be turned to one's advantage. That said, for most people *Fortuna* is the main reason for inequality in the world—an inequality you were born into it: tough—which is the source of most human conflict. So for most of humanity, life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish—sorry, brutish—and short; that wisdom may come in old age is of little consolation. To that extent, death is welcome.

What virtues there are turn out to be resolutely *communal*: courage, moderation, wealth (very often seen as corrupting), loyalty, mercy, self-restraint, friendship, honesty, trust and so on made no sense unless they invited a reciprocal response from those around you, as many of the examples in this week's episode will demonstrate. As a result, since a reciprocal response could never be guaranteed, one could never *wholly* rely on it. Here it was especially important for the great and good to live up to their reputation by the way in which they treated their fellows: if they could not do so, who would? Not to do so brought disgrace on them and possibly Rome.

It is interesting to observe that, when it comes to justice, it was not usually the law itself which was at the heart of it but the negotiations between the various parties involved, whatever the law might have said on the matter (if anything). It is as if it was equity that really counted. This brings us back to the idea of reciprocity. If one or other of a party did not feel they were being equitably treated, the relationship collapsed.

None of these virtues, however, told one precisely what or what not to *do*: they just told one how to *behave*. So the commandments such as 'do not kill/steal/exploit' would have baffled Romans: surely it all depended on circumstances? One could behave 'justly' (for example) only in the context of the whole situation. One comes back to the centrality of the idea of the *communal* understanding of what made acceptable and unacceptable human behaviour. In a world lacking big institutions—schools, police, councils, businesses, social services and so on—ancients were extraordinarily sensitive to the importance of that judgement: it *really* counted. To put it another way round, if you could not demonstrate your value to your community, you were valueless.

## MODERATION

**4.1. Preface** I shall turn to the most beneficial aspect of the human spirit: moderation. It does not allow our minds to go astray if we suddenly lose control of ourselves or are taken by a rash impulse. This is why moderation is never attacked by the fangs of criticism and always enjoys a wealth of praise. So moderation should review the effects of its influence on famous men.

**4.1.praef.** *transgrediar ad saluberrimam partem animi, moderationem, quae mentes nostras in potentiae et temeritatis incursu transuersas ferri non patitur. quae uenit ut reprehensionis morsu sit uacua et laudis quaestu sit opulentissima. itaque effectus suos in claris uiris recognoscat.*

## Metellus Macedonicus



Metellus lifting the siege of Centobrigia in 142 BC, in order to spare the lives of innocents (Armand-Charles Caraffe, 1805)

**4.1.2** Metellus Macedonicus had a very bitter argument with Scipio Aemilianus. Their dispute started off with their rivalry in achievement, but it turned into a serious and publicized enmity (i). In spite of this, when he heard people shouting that Scipio had been killed, Metellus Macedonicus rushed into the street and with a sad face and disturbed voice said, 'Come quickly, come quickly, citizens! The defences of our city have been knocked down. While Scipio Aemilianus was sleeping in his home, some evil men murdered him' (ii). O Republic, you were unhappy at the death of Scipio Aemilianus and yet happy with the humane and public-spirited grief of Metellus Macedonicus! At the same moment, the Republic realized what a great leader it had lost and what type of leader it still retained.

(i) Quintus Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus (cos, 143 B.C.) had conquered Macedonia in 148 B.C., and Scipio Aemilianus had destroyed Carthage in 146 B.C. and finished the conquest of Spain in 133 B.C.

(ii) Scipio Aemilianus died suddenly and mysteriously in 129 B.C.

**4.1.12** *acerrime cum Scipione Aemiliano Macedonicus dissenserat, eorumque ab aemulatione uirtutis profecta concitatio ad graues testatasque inimicitias progressa fuerat: sed tamen, cum interemptum Scipionem conclamari audisset, in publicum se proripuit maestoque uultu et uoce confusa 'concurrite, concurrite' inquit, 'ciues! moenia nostrae urbis euersa sunt: Scipioni enim Africano intra suos penates quiescenti nefaria uis allata est'. o rem publicam pariter Africani morte miseram et Macedonici tam humana tamque ciuili lamentatione felicem! eodem enim tempore et quantum amisisset principem et qualem haberet recognouit.*



Roman funeral

4.1.12 Metellus Macedonicus also told his sons to carry the funeral bier of Scipio Aemilianus on their shoulders, and in addition to this honour paid at his funeral, he added the following verbal one, that they would never again be able to render this service to a greater man. What became of all those arguments in the Senate house? What became of their many disagreements at the rostra? What became of those battles, which barely remained civilian, between these great citizens and leaders? All those things were, of course, eliminated by moderation, a virtue we should regard with exceptional respect.

*idem filios suos monuit ut funebri eius lecto humeros subicerent, atque huic exequiarum illum honorem uocis adiecit, non fore ut postea id officium ab illis maiori uiro praestari posset. ubi illa tot in curia iurgia? ubi tot [multae] pro rostris altercationes? ubi maximorum ciuium et ducum tantum non togata proelia? omnia nimirum ista praecipua ueneratione prosequenda deleuit moderatio.*

## GENEROSITY

### *Quintus Considius*



Cicero denounces Catiline (John Leech, 1850)

4.8.3. The generosity of Quintus Considius became well known; it set a very good example and was of considerable benefit to himself. The mad behaviour of Catiline

had caused such confusion in the Republic that even rich people could not pay back the money they owed their creditors, since his rebellion had depressed the prices of property (i). Considius had lent out 15,000,000 sesterces, but he did not allow his agents to demand payment of either the principle or the interest from his debtors. Insofar as he could, he lessened the bitterness of the public disorder by his calm behaviour as a private citizen. In a remarkably obliging way, he asserted that he would profit from his own money, not from the blood of his fellow citizens. People nowadays who really enjoy doing business love to bring bloodstained money back home, but they would learn how disgraceful their joy and exultation are if they did not think it beneath themselves to read carefully the Senate decree thanking Considius.

(i) As part of his revolutionary program (63-62 B.C.), Catiline promised a cancellation of all debts.

*4.8.3 in Q. quoque Considio saluberrimi exempli nec sine paruo ipsius fructu liberalitas adnotata est. qui Catilinae furore ita consternata re publica, ut ne a locupletibus quidem debitae pecuniae propter tumultum pretiis possessionum deminutis solui creditoribus possent, cum centies atque quinquagies sestertii summam in faenore haberet, neque de sorte quemquam debitorum suorum neque de usura appellari a suis passus est, quantumque in ipso fuit, amaritudinem publicae confusionis priuata tranquillitate mitigauit, opportune mirificeque testatus se nummorum suorum, non ciuilis sanguinis esse faeneratorem: nam qui nunc praecipue negotiatione delectantur, cum pecuniam domum cruentam retulerunt, quam inprobando gaudio exultent cognoscent, si diligenter senatus consultum, quo Considio gratiae actae sunt, legere non fastidierint.*

## JUSTICE

### *Lucius Cotta*



Roman court scene

**6.5.4** The entire body of tribunes won great praise for the following action. One of them, Lucius Cotta, relying on the inviolate nature of his office, refused to pay back his creditors (i). But the entire group of tribunes decreed that if he did not pay back the money or give the name of someone who would guarantee the loan, they would support his creditors when they demanded payment. The tribunes considered it

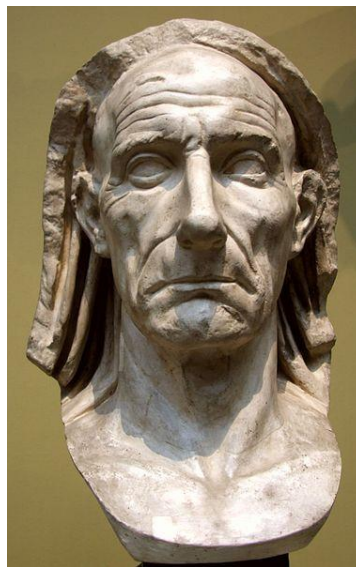
unfair that the dignity of the state should be used to cover up the dishonesty of a private person. The tribunes' sense of justice had found Cotta hiding behind the office of the tribune like a runaway slave hiding in a temple, and they dragged him out of there (ii).

(i) Lucius Aurelius Cotta (cos, 144 B.C.) was tribune of the plebs in 154 B.C.

(ii) Abused slaves could hide safely in a temple.

*6.5.4 magnam laudem et illud collegium tribunorum tulit, quod, cum unus ex eo L. Cotta fiducia sacrosanctae potestatis creditoribus suis satis facere nollet, decreuit, si neque solueret pecuniam neque daret cum quo sponsio fieret, se appellantis eum creditoribus auxilio futurum, inicum ratum maiestatem publicam priuatae perfidiae obtentu esse. itaque Cottam in tribunatu quasi in aliquo sacrario latentem tribunicia inde iustitia extraxit.*

### *Domitius and Scaurus*



Marcus Scaurus

**6.5.5** I shall turn to another equally famous action of the tribunes. Gnaeus Domitius, a tribune of the plebs, prosecuted Marcus Scaurus, the most prominent man in the state, before the people (i). If fortune favoured Domitius, he would win great fame by ruining this distinguished man; if he didn't quite succeed, he would still win great fame by attacking Scaurus.

Domitius was burning with desire to destroy Scaurus when a slave of Scaurus came to him by night and promised that he would help Domitius' case by adding several serious charges against his master. In deciding how to view this wicked betrayal, Domitius was torn between acting like an enemy and acting like a real member of the Domitius family. Justice won out over hatred: he covered his ears, shut the betrayer's mouth, and had the slave brought at once to Scaurus. I won't say that this prosecutor should have been loved by the man he accused, but he certainly deserved Scaurus's respect! Because of his other virtues and because of this action, the people were happy to elect Domitius consul, censor, and chief pontiff (ii).

(i) Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus (cos, 96 B.C.) was a tribune of the plebs in 104 B.C. when he prosecuted Marcus Aemilius Scaurus (cos, 115 B.C.).

(ii) Domitius was elected chief pontiff in 103 B.C., consul in 96 B.C., and censor in 92 B.C.

6.5.5 *cuius ut ad alium aequae inlustrem actum transgrediar, Cn. Domitius tribunus pl. M. Scaurum principem ciuitatis in iudicium populi deuocauit, ut, si fortuna aspirasset, ruina, sin minus, certe ipsa obtrectatione amplissimi uiri incrementum claritatis adprehenderet.*

*cuius opprimendi cum summo studio flagraret, seruus Scauri noctu ad eum peruenit, instructurum se eius accusationem multis et grauibus domini criminibus promittens. erat in eodem pectore et inimicus et Domitius et dominus, diuersa aestimatione nefarium indicium perpendens. iustitia uicit odium: continuo enim et suis auribus obseratis et indicis ore clauso duci eum ad Scaurum iussit. accusatorem etiam reo suo, ne dicam diligendum, certe laudandum! quem populus cum propter alias uirtutes tum hoc nomine libentius et consulem et censorem et pontificem maximum fecit.*

## LOYALTY OF WIVES TO HUSBANDS

### *Aemilia Tertia and Scipio Africanus*



6.7.1. We must also touch on the loyalty of wives. Aemilia Tertia (i) was the wife of Scipio Africanus and the mother of Cornelia, who was herself the mother of the Gracchus brothers (ii). Aemilia Tertia was so affable and tolerant that she pretended not to notice when she learned that her husband had fallen for a young female slave of hers. She did not want a woman like herself to accuse a great man like Africanus, the conqueror of the world, of being unable to control his desires. She was so free of vindictiveness that when Africanus died she freed the slave and gave her in marriage to a freedman of hers (iii).

(i) Aemilia Tertia was the youngest daughter of Lucius Aemilius Paullus (cos, 216 B.C.).

(ii) Cornelia married Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (cos. 177 B.C.). Her sons (the Gracchus brothers) were Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (tribune of the plebs, 133 B.C.) and Gaius Sempronius Gracchus (tribune of the plebs, 123 BC).

(iii) Scipio Africanus died at the end of 184 B.C.

6.7.1 *atque ut uxoriam quoque fidem attingamus, Tertia Aemilia, Africani prioris uxor, mater Corneliae Gracchorum, tantae fuit comitatis et patientiae, ut, cum sciret uiro suo ancillulam ex suis gratam esse, dissimulauerit, ne domitorem orbis Africanum femina ~ magnum uirum impatientiae reum ageret, tantumque a uindicta mens eius afuit, ut post mortem Africani manu missam ancillam in matrimonium liberto suo daret.*

### Turia



So-called *Laudatio Turiae* funerary inscription

6.7.2. When the triumvirs put Quintus Lucretius on their death list (i), his wife, Turia, hid him between the ceiling and the roof over her bedroom, letting one young female slave in on the secret. At great personal risk, Turia kept him safe from imminent death. Whereas other men on the death list went through great physical and mental agonies and barely escaped to foreign and hostile regions, her exceptional loyalty allowed him to stay safe in the bedroom and bosom of his wife. (i) Quintus Lucretius Vespillo was a prefect in the Republican navy during 49 and 48 B.C. The triumvirs massacred their political opponents in 43 and 42 B.C.

6.7.2 *Q. Lucretium proscriptum a triumuiris uxor Turia inter cameram et tectum cubiculi abditum una conscia ancillula ab inminente exitio non sine magno periculo suo tutum praestitit singularique fide id egit, ut, cum ceteri proscripti in alienis et hostilibus regionibus per summos corporis et animi cruciatus uix euaderent, ille in cubiculo et in coniugis sinu salutem retineret.*

### Sulpicia

6.7.3. Sulpicia was strictly guarded by her mother, Julia, to prevent her from following her husband, Lentulus Cruscellio, to Sicily after the triumvirs had put him on their death list (i). In spite of this, Sulpicia put on the clothes of a slave, secretly escaped with two female slaves and as many male slaves, and made her way to him. She allowed herself to be outlawed so that she could stay loyal to her husband, who had been outlawed.

(i) Lucius Cornelius Lentulus Cruscellio (praetor, 38 B.C.) escaped to Sicily in 42 B.C.

6.7.3 *Sulpicia autem, cum a matre Iulia diligentissime custodiretur, ne Lentulum Cruscellionem, uirum suum proscriptum a triumuiris in Siciliam persequeretur, nihilo minus famulari ueste sumpta cum duabus ancillis totidemque seruis ad eum clandestina fuga peruenit nec recusauit se ipsam proscribere, ut ei fides sua in coniuge proscripto constaret.*



### *The judgement of Popillius Laenas*



**8.1.amb.1** (i) We shall now discuss those who had their lives placed in jeopardy but were neither convicted nor acquitted. A certain woman was brought before the praetor Marcus Popillius Laenas (ii) because she had beaten her mother to death with a club. The jury did not vote either way, because it was abundantly clear that the daughter was driven to do this because her own children had been murdered with poison. Their grandmother had killed the children because she hated her own daughter, and the daughter had avenged their murder by murdering her own mother. The court's verdict was that the crime of the daughter did not deserve to be punished, and the crime of her mother did not deserve to be condoned.

(i) Valerius uses the Latin word *ambusti*, which literally means 'half-burned,' to describe these undecided legal cases in which the accused was neither acquitted and allowed to go away in raw innocence nor convicted and completely cooked by the legal system. That is why the abbreviation 'amb.' is used before the stories in this section.

(ii) Marcus Popillius Laenas (cos, 139 B.C.) was a praetor in 142 B.C.

**8.1.amb.1** *atque ut eos quoque referamus, qui in discrimen capitis adducti neque damnati neque absoluti sunt, apud M. Popilium Laenatem praetorem quaedam, quod matrem fuste percussam interemerat, causam dixit. de qua neutram in partem latae sententiae sunt, quia abunde constabat eandem ueneno necatorum liberorum dolore commotam, quos auia filiae infensa sustulerat, parricidium ultam esse parricidio. quorum alterum ultione, alterum absolute non dignum iudicatum est.*

## Publius Dolabella



Inscription in Dolabella's honour

**8.1.amb.2** When Publius Dolabella was ruling Asia as governor (i), his mind wavered in the same kind of doubt. A married woman from Smyrna (ii), killed her husband and her son when she discovered that they had killed a young man of wonderful character whom she had borne by a previous husband. When this matter was reported to Dolabella, he referred the case to the Areopagus in Athens (iii), because he could not bear either to release a woman who had been guilty of two murders, or to punish a woman who was moved by a justifiable sense of grievance.

(i) Publius Cornelius Dolabella was governor of Asia in 68 B.C.

(ii) Smyrna was on the east coast of Asia Minor.

(iii) The Areopagus was the law court for murder cases in Athens.

**8.1.amb.2** *eadem haesitatione Publi quoque Dolabellae proconsulari imperio Asiam obtinentis animus fluctuatus est. mater familiae Zmyrnaea uirum et filium interemit, cum ab his optimae indolis iuuenem, quem ex priore uiro enixa fuerat, occisum conperisset. quam rem Dollabella ad se delatam Athenas ad Arei pagi cognitionem relegauit, quia ipse neque liberare duabus caedibus contaminatam neque punire tam iusto dolore impulsam sustinebat.*

**8.1.amb.2 (continued)** The executive officer of the Roman people acted with consideration and kindness, but the judges of the Areopagus acted with no less wisdom. After investigating the case, they ordered the prosecutor and the accused to appear before them again one hundred years later. They were moved by the same feelings as Dolabella, but he avoided the insoluble problem of whether to convict or acquit her by transferring the case, they avoided the problem by postponing it.

**8.1.amb.2** *consideranter et mansuete populi Romani magistratus, sed Areopagitae quoque non minus sapienter, qui inspecta causa et accusatorem et ream post centum annos ad se reuerti iusserunt, eodem affectu moti, quo Dolabella. sed ille transferendo quaestionem, hi differendo damnandi atque absoluendi inexplicabilem cunctationem uitabant.*

## ELECTORAL DEFEATS



Shocked reaction to Tubero's banquet

**7.5.1** Quintus Fabius Maximus was giving a banquet to the people in honour of his paternal uncle, Scipio Aemilianus (i). Fabius asked Quintus Aelius Tubero to set up the dining room (ii), but Tubero put goatskins on cheap Carthaginian couches and set out Samian ware (iii) rather than silver dishes. People were offended by his lack of taste, and although Tubero was considered a remarkable man in all other respects, and was helped by the reputation of his grandfather, Lucius Paullus, and of his maternal uncle, Scipio Aemilianus (iv), when he entered himself as a candidate in the elections for the praetorship, he walked away from the Campus humiliated by an electoral defeat. People always respected the self-restraint of his private life, but they cared greatly for outward show in public life. So the people of the city felt that it was not just the participants at one banquet but rather the entire city itself that had reclined on those skins, and they avenged their humiliation at that banquet when it came to casting their votes.

(i) Quintus Fabius Maximus Allobrogicus (cos, 121 B.C.) organized this banquet to commemorate the death of Scipio Aemilianus in 129 B.C.

(ii) Quintus Aelius Tubero (land commissioner, 129 B.C.) was Fabius' first cousin.

(iii) Samian ware was pottery from the island of Samos (off the west coast of Asia Minor).

(iv) Tubero's mother, Aemilia, was the daughter of Lucius Aemilius Paullus (cos, 182 B.C.) and the sister of Scipio Aemilianus.

*7.5.1 Q. Aelius Tubero a Q. Fabio Maximo epulum populo nomine P. Africani patris sui dante rogatus ut triclinium sterneret lectulos Punicanos pellibus haedinis stravit et pro argenteis uasis Samia exposuit. cuius rei deformitas sic homines offendit, ut, cum alioqui uir egregius haberetur comitiisque praetoriis candidatus in campum L. Paullo auo et P. Africano auunculo nixus descendisset, repulsa inde abiret notatus: nam ut priuatim semper continentiam probabant, ita publice maxima cura splendoris habita est. quocirca urbs non unius conuiuii numerum, sed totam se in illis pelliculis iacuisse credens ruborem epuli suffragiis suis uindicauit.*

**Next week:** Extracts from Plutarch's *Moralia*: (i) bores.