

Plan of Life

Following Homer

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As with any other plan, a plan of life is made to accomplish many goals or possibly just one significant goal. In the case of the "Plan of Life Following Homer," the goal is bare survival on the one side and happiness and thriving on the other—for we do not merely wish to live but to live well (as a later Greek philosopher would say). The following plan consists of the most significant Homeric goals and practices from both the Iliad and Odyssey.

- 1. Act to survive.** Keep in mind that bare life is worth more than any amount of silver or gold. When life is gone, it is gone forever. Even a simple life is a good life. Cherish life. Be. Live.
- 2. Be the best; act to thrive.** Strive for excellence, to be outstanding. Do your best to speak and act well in every situation. Flourish! Seek happiness, which is the satisfaction of what you truly desire. Take delight in abundance and the many good things of life. Generously request the happiness of others.
- 3. Act for glory; be noble and honorable.** Flee from disgrace. Do what is necessary to build a noble reputation. Most of all, do that which is noble and honorable so that yours will be a glorious memorial. Readily acknowledge the honor and glory of others.
- 4. Be home oriented.** Clearly define what home is for you—your family, your community, an ideal, a way of life. Beware of that which causes you to forget home. Yearn for home. Return home.
- 5. Cooperate with others to survive and thrive.** Be loyal to your family. Be a faithful friend. Fulfill your duty as an ally. Fight alongside. Stand guard. Work together. Kindly host others. Be an amenable guest. Rule when necessary; submit to the rule of others (again, when necessary). Give advice; receive counsel. Whatever it is, play your role well and faithfully.
- 6. Compete with others to survive and thrive.** Be courageous. Fight forward. Take a stand. Be angry when necessary—but quick to make amends and reconcile. Be careful when boasting. Engage in battle—but only if you must. Be fair.
- 7. Cultivate your own strengths and skills.** Keep in mind human variation, that different people have different strengths and skills. Know yours. Graciously recognize those of others. Grasping the wisdom of difference, perform your own function well.
- 8. Practice wisdom; deliberate well.** Pursue knowledge. Hunt for good counsel. Know in order to deliberate; deliberate in order to resolve; resolve in order to act. Think and speak in order to act.
- 9. Be reconciled to the human condition.** Remember that humans are not gods, that we suffer pain and hardship and grow old and die. Choose to embrace these facts. Such a reconciliation paradoxically fosters a sense of freedom—the liberty to be human, the freedom to live the *when, how, and where* of one's fated role.
- 10. Endure well.** Cultivate a spirit that can endure

PLAN OF LIFE ▪ ACCORDING TO HOMER

suffering, sorrow, and misfortune. Employ Odysseus' four-point endurance method: self-talk, recollection, deliberation, and command. Remember you must endure—you have no other choice.

11. Desire well. Learn how to deal with temptation in order to restrain your desires. Practice moderation—measure. Sail by the Island of the Sun; don't stop. Bear in mind that recklessness, which is often caused by out-of-control desires, leads to destruction. Restraint,

by contrast, is liberating. Moderation will get you home.

12. Acknowledge the divine. Recognize the power that is behind all things. Strong and wise, it is how all things have come into existence. Dynamic, it is at peace. Concerned, it remains aloof. The divine cares for justice. Look to the divine for guidance, for the divine knows all things. Pray with hands outstretched to heaven.

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"My father had me learn every word of Homer . . . to see me develop into a good man." —Niceratus of Athens

"Homer enthusiasts say that Homer has been the educator of Greece, and for the education and government of humans, we should build up our entire lives with the assistance of this poet." —Socrates of Athens

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