

ALTERNATIVE VALUES

*The Perennial Debate about
Wealth, Power, Fame, Praise,
Glory, and Physical Pleasure*

EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
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18. A man who raises himself by degrees to wealth and power, contracts, in the course of this protracted labor, habits of prudence and restraint which he cannot afterwards shake off. A man cannot gradually enlarge his mind as he does his house.

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE ♦ 1805–1859
Democracy in America 2.3.19

19. Privilege is the greatest enemy of right.

MARIE VON EBNER-ESCHENBACH ♦ 1830–1916
Aphorisms

ARGUMENTS FOR THE PURSUIT OF WEALTH AND POWER

20. Those who are not envied are never wholly happy. It is a nobler fate to be envied than to be pitied.

AESCHYLUS ♦ 525–456 B.C.E.
Agamemnon I

21. As wealth is power, so all power will infallibly draw wealth to itself by some means or other.

EDMUND BURKE ♦ 1729–1797
Speech in the House of Commons, February 11, 1780

22. The law may in a mad freak say that all shall have power except the owners of property; they shall have no vote. Nevertheless, by a higher law, the property will, year after year, write every statute that respects property.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON ♦ 1803–1882
Politics

23. Men, such as they are, very naturally seek money or power; and power because it is as good as money.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON ♦ 1803–1882
The American Scholar

24. To the lowly, the powerful and rich are as gods.

EURIPIDES ♦ 485–406 B.C.E.
Iphigenia in Tauris

25. Money is power in American politics. It always has been.

WILLIAM GREIDER ♦ 1936–
Who Will Tell the People

26. So oblique is human judgment that we nearly always praise the lavish habits of princes, though they be joined with rapacity; more so, in fact, than we praise their parsimony, which is usually attended by a sacred regard for the property of others.

FRANCESCO GUICCIARDINI ♦ 1483–1540
Storia d'Italia

27. It is much better to be envied than pitied.

HERODOTUS ♦ C. 485–C. 425 B.C.E.
Histories

28. We are . . . removed farther than ever away from the happy sons of earth who lord it over land and sea and men in the full-blown lustihood that wealth and power can give, and before whom, stiffen ourselves as we will by appealing to anti-snobish first principles,

we cannot escape an emotion, open or sneaking, of respect and dread.

WILLIAM JAMES ♦ 1842–1910
Psychology X

29. Get place and wealth, if possible, with grace;
If not, by any means get wealth and place.

ALEXANDER POPE ♦ 1688–1744
Imitations of Horace

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PURSUIT OF WEALTH AND FAME

30. What is fame? an empty bubble;
Gold? a transient, shining trouble.

JAMES GRAINGER ♦ c. 1721–1766
Solitude 1.96

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PURSUIT OF WEALTH AND PRAISE

31. Why do we, in fact, almost all of us, desire to increase our incomes? It may seem, at first sight, as though material goods were what we desire. But, in fact, we desire these mainly in order to impress our neighbours. When a man moves into a larger house in a more genteel quarter, he reflects that “better” people will call on him and some unprosperous cronies of former days be dropped. When he sends his son to a school or an expensive university, he