

MYSON OF CHENAE



We don't know where Chenae was – it may have been in Laconia in Greece, or it may have been on the island of Crete. We don't have a century for this person's floruit and although he was said to have been a son of a tyrant named Strymon, "Strymon" happens to be the name of a river. All sources agree that Myson was a humble farmer who lived to the age of 97 and that he asserted:

"We should not investigate facts by the light of arguments, but arguments by the light of facts."

... PER DIOGENES LAËRTIUS

**"NARRATIVE HISTORY" AMOUNTS TO FABULATION,
THE REAL STUFF BEING MERE CHRONOLOGY**

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401 BCE

It was probably before the end of the 5th century that the Greeks first drew up their list known as The Seven Wise Men of Antiquity (οἱ ἑπτὰ σοφοί), typical members being [Bias of Priene](#) (Βίας ο Πριηνεύς), [Chilon of Sparta](#) (Χεῖλων), [Cleobulus of Lindos](#) (Κλεόβουλος), [Periander of Corinth](#) (Περίανδρος), [Pittacus of Mitylene](#) (Πιττακός), [Solon of Athens](#) (Σόλων), [Thales of Miletus](#) (Θαλῆς), and [Myson of Chenae](#) (Μύσων ὁ Χιηνεύς).



The earliest version of this list that we now have is the one that was recorded by [Plato](#). To accommodate rival claimants to wisdom, the list would expand to 10 and then 17. As you can see, [Plato](#) is the only source that lists [Myson](#). All versions, however, do contain four unchallenged names, such as “[Solon of Athens](#).”





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Plato	Ephorus	Demetrius	Anonymous	Anonymous	Maeandrius	Dicaearchus
Θαλῆς	Θαλῆς	Θαλῆς	Θαλῆς	Θαλῆς	Θαλῆς	Θαλῆς
Πιττακός	Πιττακός	Πιττακός	Πιττακός	Πιττακός	Πιττακός	Πιττακός
Βίας	Βίας	Βίας	Βίας	Βίας	Βίας	Βίας
Σόλων	Σόλων	Σόλων	Σόλων	Σόλων	Σόλων	Σόλων
Χεῖλων	Χεῖλων	Χεῖλων	Χεῖλων	Χεῖλων	Χεῖλων	Περίανδρος
Κλεόβουλος	Κλεόβουλος	Κλεόβουλος	Κλεόβουλος	Κλεόβουλος	Ἐπιμενίδης	Ἀριστόδημος
Μύσων	Ἀνάχαρσις	Περίανδρος	Ὁ Πυθαγόρας	Ἄκουσίλαος	Λεωφαντος	Παμφίλος

NOBODY COULD GUESS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT





MYSON OF CHENAE

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1822



A new edition of [François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon](#)'s *ABRÉGÉ DE LA VIE DES PLUS ILLUSTRES PHILOSOPHES DE L'ANTIQUITÉ, AVEC LEURS DOGMES, LEURS SYSTÈMES, LEUR MORALE, ET UN RECUEIL DE LEURS PLUS BELLES MAXIMES. OUVRAGE DESTINÉ À L'ÉDUCATION DE LA JEUNESSE; PAR F. DE SALIGNAC DE LA MOTTE-FÉNÉLON. NOUVELLE ÉDITION, REVUE AVEC SOIN, AUGMENTÉE DE LA LETTRE ADRESSÉE PAR L'AUTEUR À UN MEMBRE DE L'ACADÉMIE, EN 1714, SUR LES ANCIENS ET LES MODERNES; ORNÉE DU PORTRAIT DE FÉNÉLON, ET DE VINGT-SIX PORTRAITS DES PHILOSOPHES* (Paris, de l'Imprimerie D'Auguste Delalain, Libraire, rue des Mathurins-St.-Jacques, n° 5). This would be in the library of [Bronson Alcott](#), and thus available to [Henry Thoreau](#).

PITTACUS

*Florissait dans la 42^e olympiade; mourut
la 3^e année de la 52^e, âgé de 70 ans.*

PITTACUS, fils d'Hirradius, originaire de Thrace, naquit à Mytilène, petite ville de l'île de Lesbos, environ la 29^e olympiade. Il fut, pendant sa jeunesse, fort entreprenant, brave soldat, grand capitaine, et toujours bon citoyen. Il tenait pour maxime qu'il fallait s'accommoder au temps, et se servir de l'occasion.

PHILOSOPHES DE L'ANTIQUITÉ

LIFE IS LIVED FORWARD BUT UNDERSTOOD BACKWARD?
— NO, THAT'S GIVING TOO MUCH TO THE HISTORIAN'S STORIES.
LIFE ISN'T TO BE UNDERSTOOD EITHER FORWARD OR BACKWARD.

Il disait ordinairement que la nécessité était quelque chose de si fort, que les dieux mêmes étaient obligés d'obéir à ses lois.

Que c'était dans le gouvernement de la république qu'un homme faisait connaître l'étendue de son esprit.

Que les sages devaient prévoir les malheurs qui leur pouvaient arriver, afin de les pouvoir détourner ; et que les gens de cœur les devaient supporter généreusement lorsqu'ils étaient arrivés.

Qu'il était très-difficile d'être homme de bien.

Qu'il n'y avait rien de meilleur que de s'appliquer toujours à bien faire ce qu'on fait dans le moment.

Que , pour réussir , il fallait méditer à loisir, et exécuter promptement les choses qu'on avait projetées.

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Quelque temps après, les pêcheurs de Messène trouvèrent dans le ventre d'un gros poisson un vase d'or, où ces mots étaient gravés : **AU PLUS SAGE**. Le sénat de Messène s'assembla pour délibérer à qui on le devait donner ; les filles que Bias avait traitées si humainement se présentèrent à l'assemblée avec leurs parens, et ils crièrent tous ensemble qu'il n'y avait personne plus sage que Bias. Le sénat de Messène lui envoya ce vase. Bias le considéra, et après avoir lu l'inscription qui était autour, il refusa de l'accepter, et dit que ce titre n'appartenait qu'à Appollon.

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Il était un jour dans un vaisseau , avec quelques impies : il s'éleva tout d'un coup une tempête si furiense , que le vaisseau était à tout moment prêt à périr. Ces impies , effrayés de la crainte de la mort , invoquaient les dieux : Taisez-vous , leur dit Bias , de peur qu'ils ne s'aperçoivent que vous êtes ici , car nous serions tous perdus.

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Il se rencontra par hasard à Priène , lieu de sa naissance , lors de la prise et du sac de cette malheureuse ville : tous les citoyens emportaient tout ce qu'ils pouvaient , et s'enfuyaient dans les lieux où ils croyaient pouvoir se mettre en sûreté ; le seul Bias demeurait tranquille au milieu d'une si grande désolation , sans se remuer non plus que s'il eût été tout-à-fait insensible aux malheurs de sa patrie. Quelqu'un lui demanda pourquoi il ne songeait pas à sauver quelque chose comme les autres ? Je le fais aussi , répondit Bias , car je porte tout mon bien avec moi.



MYSON OF CHENAE

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1840

July 8, Wednesday: [Henry Thoreau](#) was reading [François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon](#)'s *ABRÉGÉ DE LA VIE DES PLUS ILLUSTRÉS PHILOSOPHES DE L'ANTIQUITÉ* (Nouvelle édition, Paris: Delalain, 1822), in a personal copy he had acquired in 1834. This reading was leading him onward to [Solon of Athens](#).

PHILOSOPHES DE L'ANTIQUITÉ



July 8, 1840: Doubt and falsehood are yet good preachers. They affirm roundly, while they deny partially.

I am pleased to learn that [Thales](#) was up and stirring by night not unfrequently, as his astronomical discoveries prove.

It was a saying of [Solon](#) that “it is necessary to observe a medium in all things.”

The golden mean, in ethics as in physics, is the centre of the system, and that about which all revolve; and though, to a distant and plodding planet, it is the uttermost extreme. yet, when that planet's year is complete, it will be found central. They who are alarmed lest virtue run into extreme good, have not yet wholly embraced her, but described only a slight arc about her, and from so small a curvature you can calculate no centre whatever; but their mean is no better than meanness, nor their medium than mediocrity.

The brave man, while he observes strictly this golden mean, seems to run through all extremes with impunity; like the sun, which now appears in the zenith, now in the horizon, and again is faintly reflected from the moon's disk, and has the credit of describing an entire great circle, crossing the equinoctial and solstitial colures, without detriment to his steadfastness or mediocrity.

Every planet asserts its own to be the centre of the system.

Only meanness is mediocre, moderate; but the true medium is not contained within any bounds, but is as wide as the ends it connects.

When [Solon](#) endeavored to prove that Salamis had formerly belonged to the Athenians and not to the Megarians, he caused the tombs to be opened, and showed that the inhabitants of Salamis turned the faces of their dead to the same side with the Athenians, but the Megarians to the opposite side.

So does each part bear witness to all, and the history of all the past may be read in a single grain of its ashes.

THE FUTURE IS MOST READILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





MYSON OF CHENAE

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July 11, Saturday: [Henry Thoreau](#) continued in his reading in his personal copy of the 1822 Paris Delalain edition of [François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon](#)'s *ABRÉGÉ DE LA VIE DES PLUS ILLUSTRÉS PHILOSOPHES DE L'ANTIQUITÉ*, in the personal copy he had acquired in 1834. This reading was leading him onward to [Pittacus of Mitylene](#)



July 11: The true art is not merely a sublime consolation and holiday labor which the gods have given to sickly mortals, to be wrought at in parlors, and not in smithies amid soot and smoke, but such a masterpiece as you may imagine a dweller on the table-lands of Central Asia might produce, with threescore and ten years for canvas, and the faculties of a man for tools, — a human life, wherein you might hope to discover more than the freshness of Guido's Aurora, or the mild light of Titian's landscapes; not a bald imitation or rival of Nature, but the restored original of which she is the reflection. For such a work as this, whole galleries of Greece and Italy are a mere mixing of colors and preparatory quarrying of marble.

Not how is the idea expressed in stone or on canvas, is the question, but how far it has obtained form and expression in the life of the artist.

There is much covert truth in the old mythology which makes Vulcan a brawny and deformed smith, who sweat more than the other gods. His smithy was not like a modern studio.

Let us not wait any longer, but step down from the mountains on to the plain of earth. Let our delay be like the sun's, when he lingers on the dividing line of day and night a brief space — when the world is grateful for his light. We will make such haste as the morning and such delay as the evening.

It concerns us rather to be something here present than to leave something behind us.

It is the man determines what is said, not the words. If a mean person uses a wise maxim, I bethink me how it can be interpreted so as to commend itself to his meanness; but if a wise man makes a commonplace remark, I consider what wider construction it will admit. When [Pittacus](#) says, "It is necessary to accommodate one's self to the time and take advantage of the occasion," I assent. He might have considered that to accommodate one's self to all times, and take advantage of all occasions, was really to be independent, and make our own opportunity.

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PHILOSOPHES DE L'ANTIQUITÉ

THE FUTURE CAN BE EASILY PREDICTED IN RETROSPECT





MYSON OF CHENAE

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July 31, Friday: [Henry Thoreau](#) continued in his reading in his personal copy of the 1822 Paris Delalain edition of [François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénélon](#)'s *ABRÉGÉ DE LA VIE DES PLUS ILLUSTRÉS PHILOSOPHES DE L'ANTIQUITÉ*, in the personal copy he had acquired in 1834.

PHILOSOPHES DE L'ANTIQUITÉ



July 31: The very dogs that sullenly bay the moon from farm yards o' these nights, evince more heroism than is tamely barked forth in all the civil exhortations and war sermons of the age.

Our actions should make the stars forget their sphere music, and chant an elegaic strain — that heroism should have departed out of their ranks, and gone over to humanity.

If want of patriotism be objected to us, because we hold ourselves aloof from the din of politics, I know of no better answer than that of Anaxagoras to those who in like case reproached him with indifference to his country because he had withdrawn from it, and devoted himself to the search after truth— “On the contrary” he replied pointing to the heavens, “I esteem it infinitely.”

The very laughter and jokes of a sober man are sober in their effects— They shake the firmament.

DOG

Any melodious sound apprises me of the infinite wealth of God.

DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION? GOOD.



MYSON OF CHENAE

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1907

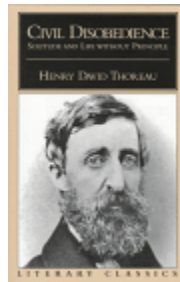
Bubonic Plague killed 1,200,000 in [India](#).

[Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi](#), a British-educated [Indian](#) lawyer in prison in Pretoria, South Africa, read "RESISTANCE TO CIVIL GOVERNMENT":



The Thoreau-Gandhi entente has ... become a straw for Indo-American amity for both nations to clutch at on appropriate occasion. The Thoreau Centennial provided such an occasion in 1962, and the Indian Ambassador to the United States made a whole log out of this straw when he delivered his address at the dedication of Malvina Hoffman's bust of Thoreau in the Hall of Fame at New York University.

Thoreau's essay titled "Civil Disobedience" was republished in a South African newspaper [Indian Opinion](#) which Gandhi was editing.



The leading anarchist journal in the US, [Liberty](#), began to claim "Civil Disobedience" as an "anarchist classic." However, these people were still focusing more upon [Waldo Emerson](#) and Walt Whitman than upon [Henry Thoreau](#). (And they were paying no attention at all to actual US legal enactment and precedent.)



Publication of the Reverend James Wood's THE NUTTALL ENCYCLOPEDIA BEING A CONCISE AND COMPREHENSIVE DICTIONARY OF GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CONSISTING OF OVER 16,000 TERSE AND ORIGINAL ARTICLES ON NEARLY ALL SUBJECTS DISCUSSED IN LARGER ENCYCLOPÆDIAS, AND SPECIALLY DEALING WITH SUCH AS COME UNDER THE CATEGORIES OF HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY, LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND ART:

THE SEVEN SAGES OF GREECE:

- [Solon of Athens](#), his motto "Know thyself"
- [Chilo of Sparta](#), his motto "Consider the end"
- [Thales of Miletus](#), his motto "Whoso hateth suretyship is sure"
- [Bias of Priene](#), his motto "Most men are bad"
- [Cleobulus of Lindos](#), his motto "Avoid extremes"



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- [Pittacus of Mitylene](#), his motto "Seize Time by the forelock"
- [Periander of Corinth](#), his motto "Nothing is impossible to industry."

[WILLIAM TELL](#), Swiss hero and patriot, a peasant, native of the canton of [Uri](#), who flourished in the beginning of the 14th century; resisted the oppression of the Austrian governor Gessler, and was taken prisoner, but was promised his liberty if with his bow and arrow he could hit an apple on the head of his son, a feat he accomplished with one arrow, with the second arrow in his belt, which he told Gessler he had kept to shoot him with if he had failed. This so incensed the governor that he bound him to carry off to his castle; but as they crossed the lake a storm arose, and Tell had to be unbound to save them, when he leapt upon a rock and made off, to lie in ambush, whence he shot the oppressor through the heart as he passed him; a rising followed, which ended only with the emancipation of [Switzerland](#) from the yoke of Austria.

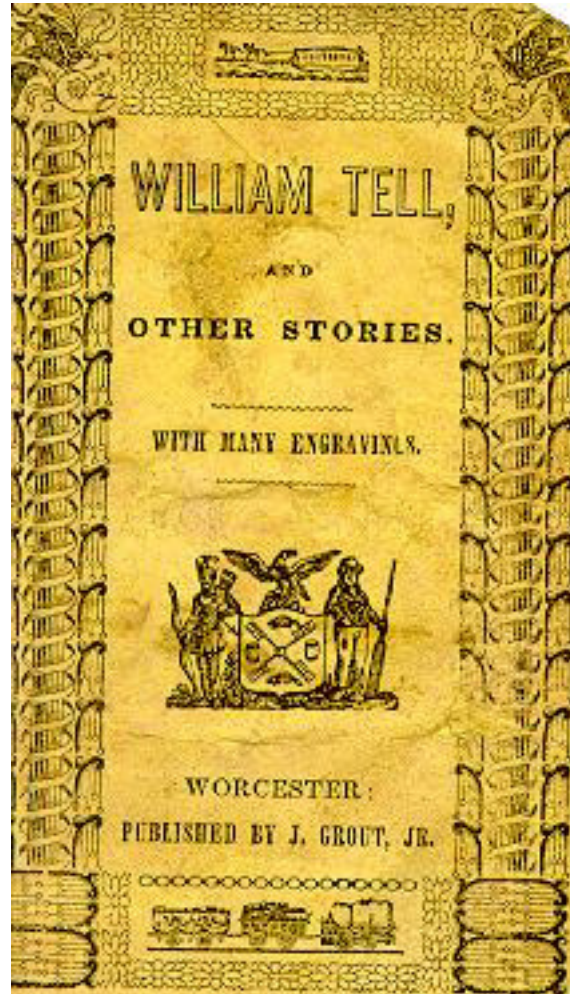
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(People still play around with this legend. For instance, on January 16, 2001, at a circus performance in Paris, Mme Cathy Jamet has been shot in the face by a crossbow arrow fired by her husband M Alain Jamet.)



CHANGE IS ETERNITY, STASIS A FIGMENT



1919

John Bartlett (1820-1905). FAMILIAR QUOTATIONS, 10th ed.

- Anacharsis coming to Athens, knocked at [Solon](#)'s door, and told him that he, being a stranger, was come to be his guest, and contract a friendship with him; and Solon replying, "It is better to make friends at home," Anacharsis replied, "Then you that are at home make friendship with me." (Life of Solon)

Have in readiness this saying of [Solon](#), "But we will not give up our virtue in exchange for their wealth."

[Solon](#) used to say that speech was the image of actions;... that laws were like cobwebs,—for that if any trifling or powerless thing fell into them, they held it fast; while if it were something weightier, it broke through them and was off.

Solon. x.

[Solon](#) gave the following advice: "Consider your honour, as a gentleman, of more weight than an oath. Never tell a lie. Pay attention to matters of importance."

Solon. xii.

As some say, [Solon](#) was the author of the apophthegm, "Nothing in excess."

Solon. xvi.

- [Pittacus](#) said that half was more than the whole.
Pittacus. ii.

Heraclitus says that [Pittacus](#), when he had got Alcæus into his power, released him, saying, "Forgiveness is better than revenge."

Pittacus. iii.

One of his sayings was, "Even the gods cannot strive against necessity."

[Pittacus](#). iv.

Another was, "Watch your opportunity."

[Pittacus](#). vii.

- Alcæus mentions Aristodemus in these lines:—
'T is money makes the man; and he who 's none
Is counted neither good nor honourable.

[Thales](#). vii.

[Thales](#) said there was no difference between life and death. "Why, then," said some one to him, "do not you die?" "Because," said he, "it does make no difference."

Thales. ix.



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When [Thales](#) was asked what was difficult, he said, “To know one’s self.” And what was easy, “To advise another.”

[Thales](#). ix.

He said that men ought to remember those friends who were absent as well as those who were present.

[Thales](#). ix.

The apophthegm “Know thyself” is his.

[Thales](#). xiii.

Writers differ with respect to the apophthegms of the Seven Sages, attributing the same one to various authors.

[Thales](#). xiv.

- [Chilo](#) advised, “not to speak evil of the dead.”
[Chilo](#). ii.
- [Bias](#) used to say that men ought to calculate life both as if they were fated to live a long and a short time, and that they ought to love one another as if at a future time they would come to hate one another; for that most men were bad.
[Bias](#). v.
- Ignorance plays the chief part among men, and the multitude of words; but opportunity will prevail.
[Cleobulus](#). iv.
- The saying, “Practice is everything,” is [Periander](#)’s.
[Periander](#). vi.
- It was a common saying of [Myson](#) that men ought not to investigate things from words, but words from things; for that things are not made for the sake of words, but words for things.
[Myson](#). iii.

“MAGISTERIAL HISTORY” IS FANTASIZING: HISTORY IS CHRONOLOGY



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"It's all now you see. Yesterday won't be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago."

- Remark by character "Garin Stevens"
in William Faulkner's INTRUDER IN THE DUST



Prepared: December 2, 2014



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ARRGH AUTOMATED RESEARCH REPORT

GENERATION HOTLINE



This stuff presumably looks to you as if it were generated by a human. Such is not the case. Instead, someone has requested that we pull it out of the hat of a pirate who has grown out of the shoulder of our pet parrot "Laura" (as above). What these chronological lists are: they are research reports compiled by ARRGH algorithms out of a database of modules which we term the Kouroo Contexture (this is data mining). To respond to such a request for information we merely push a button.



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Commonly, the first output of the algorithm has obvious deficiencies and we need to go back into the modules stored in the contexture and do a minor amount of tweaking, and then we need to punch that button again and recompile the chronology – but there is nothing here that remotely resembles the ordinary “writerly” process you know and love. As the contents of this originating contexture improve, and as the programming improves, and as funding becomes available (to date no funding whatever has been needed in the creation of this facility, the entire operation being run out of pocket change) we expect a diminished need to do such tweaking and recompiling, and we fully expect to achieve a simulation of a generous and untiring robotic research librarian. Onward and upward in this brave new world.

First come first serve. There is no charge.
Place requests with <Kouroo@kouroo.info>. Arrgh.