

from *THE LIVES AND OPINIONS OF EMINENT PHILOSOPHERS*
by Diogenes Laertius, Translated by C.D. Yonge

I. DIOGENES was a native of Sinope, the son of Tresius, a money-changer. And Diocles says that he was forced to flee from his native city, as his father kept the public bank there, and had adulterated the coinage. But Eubulides, in his essay on Diogenes, says, that it was Diogenes himself who did this, and that he was banished with his father. And, indeed, he himself, in his *Perdalus*, says of himself that he had adulterated the public money. Others say that he was one of the curators, and was persuaded by the artisans employed, and that he went to Delphi, or else to the oracle at Delos, and there consulted Apollo as to whether he should do what people were trying to persuade him to do; and that, as the God gave him permission to do so, Diogenes, not comprehending that the God meant that he might change the political customs of his country if he could, adulterated the coinage; and being detected, was banished, as some people say, but as other accounts have it, took the alarm and fled away of his own accord. Some again, say that he adulterated the money which he had received from his father; and that his father was thrown into prison and died there; but that Diogenes escaped and went to Delphi, and asked, not whether he might tamper with the coinage, but what he could do to become very celebrated, and that in consequence he received the oracular answer which I have mentioned.

II. And when he came to Athens he attached himself to Antisthenes; but as he repelled him, because he admitted no one; he at last forced his way to him by his pertinacity. And once, when he raised his stick at him, he put his head under it, and said, "Strike, for you will not find any stick hard enough to drive me away as long as you continue to speak." And from this time forth he was one of his pupils; and being an exile, he naturally betook himself to a simple mode of life.

III. And when, as Theophrastus tells us, in his *Megaric Philosopher*, he saw a mouse running about and not seeking for a bed, nor taking care to keep in the dark, nor looking for any of those things which appear enjoyable to such an animal, he found a remedy for his own poverty. He was, according to the account of some people, the first person who doubled up his cloak out of necessity, and who slept in it; and who carried a wallet, in which he kept his food; and who used whatever place was near for all sorts of purposes, eating, and sleeping, and conversing in it. In reference to which habit he used to say, pointing to the Colonnade of Jupiter, and to the Public Magazine, "that the Athenians had built him places to live in." Being attacked with illness, he supported himself with a staff; and after that he carried it continually, not indeed in the city, but whenever he was walking in the roads, together with his wallet, as Olympiodorus, the chief man of the Athenians tells us; and Polymeter, the orator, and Lysanias, the son of Aeschorion, tell the same story.

When he had written to some one to look out and get ready a small house for him, as he delayed to do it, he took a cask which he found in the Temple of Cybele, for his house, as he himself tells us in his letters. And during the summer he used to roll himself in the warm sand, but in winter he would embrace statues all covered with snow, practising himself, on every occasion, to endure anything.

IV. Diogenes was very violent in expressing his haughty disdain of others. He said that the scholê (school) of Euclides was cholê (gall). And he used to call Plato's diatribê (discussions) katatribê

(disguise). It was also a saying of his that the Dionysian games were a great marvel to fools; and that the demagogues were the ministers of the multitude. He used likewise to say, "that when in the course of his life he beheld pilots, and physicians, and philosophers, he thought man the wisest of all animals; but when again he beheld interpreters of dreams, and soothsayers, and those who listened to them, and men puffed up with glory or riches, then he thought that there was not a more foolish animal than man." Another of his sayings was, "that he thought a man ought oftener to provide himself with a reason than with a halter." On one occasion, when he noticed Plato at a very costly entertainment tasting some olives, he said, "O you wise man! why, after having sailed to Sicily for the sake of such a feast, do you not now enjoy what you have before you?" And Plato replied, "By the Gods, Diogenes, while I was there I ate olives and all such things a great deal." Diogenes rejoined, "What then did you want to sail to Syracuse for? Did not Attica at that time produce any olives?" But Favorinus, in his Universal History, tells this story of Aristippus. At another time he was eating dried figs, when Plato met him, and he said to him, "You may have a share of these;" and as he took some and ate them, he said, "I said that you might have a share of them, not that you might eat them all." On one occasion Plato had invited some friends who had come to him from Dionysius to a banquet, and Diogenes trampled on his carpets, and said, "Thus I trample on the empty pride of Plato;" and Plato made him answer, "How much arrogance are you displaying, O Diogenes! when you think that you are not arrogant at all." But, as others tell the story, Diogenes said, "Thus I trample on the pride of Plato;" and that Plato rejoined, "With quite as much pride yourself, O Diogenes." Sotion too, in his fourth book, states, that the Cynic made the following speech to Plato: Diogenes once asked him for some wine, and then for some dried figs; so he sent him an entire jar full; and Diogenes said to him, "Will you, if you are asked how many two and two make, answer twenty? In this way, you neither give with any reference to what you are asked for, nor do you answer with reference to the question put to you." He used also to ridicule him as an interminable talker. When he was asked where in Greece he saw virtuous men; "Men," said he, "nowhere; but I see good boys in Lacedaemon." On one occasion, when no one came to listen to him while he was discoursing seriously, he began to whistle. And then when people flocked round him, he reproached them for coming with eagerness to folly, but being lazy and indifferent about good things. One of his frequent sayings was, "That men contended with one another in punching and kicking, but that no one showed any emulation in the pursuit of virtue." He used to express his astonishment at the grammarians for being desirous to learn everything about the misfortunes of Ulysses, and being ignorant of their own. He used also to say, "That the musicians fitted the strings to the lyre properly, but left all the habits of their soul ill-arranged." And, "That mathematicians kept their eyes fixed on the sun and moon, and overlooked what was under their feet." "That orators were anxious to speak justly, but not at all about acting so." Also, "That misers blamed money, but were preposterously fond of it." He often condemned those who praise the just for being superior to money, but who at the same time are eager themselves for great riches. He was also very indignant at seeing men sacrifice to the Gods to procure good health, and yet at the sacrifice eating in a manner injurious to health. He often expressed his surprise at slaves, who, seeing their masters eating in a gluttonous manner, still do not themselves lay hands on any of the eatables. He would frequently praise those who were about to marry, and yet did not marry; or who were about to take a voyage, and yet did not take a voyage; or who were about to engage in affairs of state, and did not do so; and those who were about to rear children, yet did not rear any; and those who were preparing to take up their abode with princes, and yet did not take it up. One of his sayings was, "That one ought to hold out one's hand to a friend without closing the fingers."

Hermippus, in his *Sale of Diogenes*, says that he was taken prisoner and put up to be sold, and asked what he could do; and he answered, "Govern men." And so he bade the crier "give notice that if any one wants to purchase a master, there is one here for him." When he was ordered not to sit down; "It makes no difference," said he, "for fish are sold, be where they may." He used to say, that he wondered at men always ringing a dish or jar before buying it, but being content to judge of a man by his look alone. When Xenocrates bought him, he said to him that he ought to obey him even though he was his slave; for that a physician or a pilot would find men to obey them even though they might be slaves.

V. And Eubulus says, in his essay entitled, *The Sale of Diogenes*, that he taught the children of Xenocrates, after their other lessons, to ride, and shoot, and sling, and dart. And then in the *Gymnasium* he did not permit the trainer to exercise them after the fashion of athletes, but exercised them himself to just the degree sufficient to give them a good colour and good health. And the boys retained in their memory many sentences of poets and prose writers, and of Diogenes himself; and he used to give them a concise statement of everything in order to strengthen their memory; and at home he used to teach them to wait upon themselves, contenting themselves with plain food, and drinking water. And he accustomed them to cut their hair close, and to eschew ornament, and to go without tunics or shoes, and to keep silent, looking at nothing except themselves as they walked along. He used, also to take them out hunting; and they paid the greatest attention and respect to Diogenes himself, and spoke well of him to their parents.

VI. And the same author affirms, that he grew old in the household of Xenocrates, and that when he died he was buried by his sons. And that while he was living with him, Xenocrates once asked him how he should bury him; and he said, "On my face;" and when he was asked why, he said, "Because, in a little while, everything will be turned upside down." And he said this because the Macedonians were already attaining power, and becoming a mighty people from having been very inconsiderable. Once, when a man had conducted him into a magnificent house, and had told him that he must not spit, after hawking a little, he spit in his face, saying that he could not find a worse place. But some tell this story of Aristippus. Once, he called out, "Holloa, men." And when some people gathered round him in consequence he drove them away with his stick, saying, "I called men, and not dregs." This anecdote I have derived from Hecaton, in the first book of his *Apophthegms*. They also relate that Alexander said that if he had not been Alexander, he should have liked to be Diogenes. He used to call *anapêroi* (cripples), not those who were dumb and blind, but those who had no wallet (*pêra*). On one occasion he went half shaved into an entertainment of young men, as Metrocles tells us in his *Apophthegms*, and so was beaten by them. And afterwards he wrote the names of all those who had beaten him on a white tablet, and went about with the tablet round his neck, so as to expose them to insult, as they were generally condemned and reproached for their conduct.

VII. He used to say that he was the hound of those who were praised; but that none of those who praised them dared to go out hunting with him. A man once said to him, "I conquered men at the Pythian games:" on which he said, "I conquer men, but you only conquer slaves." When some people said to him, "You are an old man, and should rest for the remainder of your life;" "Why so?" replied he, "suppose I had run a long distance, ought I to stop when I was near the end, and not rather press on?" Once, when he was invited to a banquet, he said that

he would not come: for that the day before no one had thanked him for coming. He used to go bare foot through the snow, and to do a number of other things which have been already mentioned. Once he attempted to eat raw meat, but he could not digest it. On one occasion he found Demosthenes, the orator, dining in an inn; and as he was slipping away, he said to him, "You will now be ever so much more in an inn." Once, when some strangers wished to see Demosthenes, he stretched out his middle finger, and said, "This is the great demagogue of the Athenian people." When some one had dropped a loaf, and was ashamed to pick it up again, he, wishing to give him a lesson, tied a cord round the neck of a bottle and dragged it all through the Ceramicus. He used to say, that he imitated the teachers of choruses, for that they spoke too loud in order that the rest might catch the proper tone. Another of his sayings, was that most men were within a finger's breadth of being mad. If, then, any one were to walk along, stretching out his middle finger, he will seem to be mad; but if he puts out his fore finger, he will not be thought so. Another of his sayings was, that things of great value were often sold for nothing, and vice versa. Accordingly, that a statue would fetch three thousand drachmas, and a bushel of meal only two obols. When Xeniadès had bought him, he said to Diogenes, "Come, do what you are ordered to."

"Suppose," rejoined Diogenes, "you had been sick, and had bought a physician, could you refuse to be guided by him, and tell him "The streams of sacred rivers now
Run backwards to their source?"

VIII. Once a man came to him, and wished to study philosophy as his pupil; and he gave him a sapperda and made him follow him. And as he from shame threw it away and departed, he soon afterwards met him and, laughing, said to him, "A sapperda has dissolved your friendship for me." But Diocles tells this story in the following manner; that when some one said to him, "Give me a commission, Diogenes," he carried him off, and gave him a halfpenny worth of cheese to carry. And as he refused to carry it, "See," said Diogenes, "a halfpenny worth of cheese has broken off our friendship."

IX. On one occasion he saw a child drinking out of its hands, and so he threw away the cup which belonged to his wallet, saying, "That child has beaten me in simplicity." He also threw away his spoon, after seeing a boy, when he had broken his vessel, take up his lentils with a crust of bread. And he used to argue thus, - "Everything belongs to the gods; and wise men are the friends of the gods. All things are in common among friends; therefore everything belongs to wise men." Once he saw a woman falling down before the Gods in an unbecoming attitude; he, wishing to cure her of her superstition, as Zoilus of Perga tells us, came up to her, and said, "Are you not afraid, O woman, to be in such an indecent attitude, when some God may be behind you, for every place is full of him?" He consecrated a man to Aesculapius, who was to run up and beat all these who prostrated themselves with their faces to the ground; and he was in the habit of saying that the tragic curse had come upon him, for that he was

Houseless and citiless, a piteous exile
From his dear native land; a wandering beggar,
Scraping a pittance poor from day to day.

X. And another of his sayings was that he opposed confidence to fortune, nature to law, and reason to suffering. Once, while he was sitting in the sun in the Craneum, Alexander was standing by, and said to him, "Ask any favour you choose of me." And he replied, "Cease to

shade me from the sun." On one occasion a man was reading some long passages, and when he came to the end of the book and showed that there was nothing more written, "Be of good cheer, my friends," exclaimed Diogenes, "I see land." A man once proved to him syllogistically that he had horns, so he put his hand to his forehead and said, "I do not see them." And in a similar manner he replied to one who had been asserting that there was no such thing as motion, by getting up and walking away. When a man was talking about the heavenly bodies and meteors, "Pray how many days," said he to him, "is it since you came down from heaven?" A profligate eunuch had written on his house, "Let no evil thing enter in." "Where," said Diogenes, "is the master of the house going?" After having anointed his feet with perfume, he said that the ointment from his head mounted up to heaven, and that from his feet up to his nose. When the Athenians entreated him to be initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries, and said that in the shades below the initiated had the best seats; "It will," he replied, "be an absurd thing if Aegeus and Epaminondas are to live in the mud, and some miserable wretches, who have been initiated, are to be in the islands of the blest." Some mice crept up to his table, and he said, "See, even Diogenes maintains his favourites." Once, when he was leaving the bath, and a man asked him whether many men were bathing, he said, "No;" but when a number of people came out, he confessed that there were a great many. When Plato called him a dog, he said, "Undoubtedly, for I have come back to those who sold me."

XI. Plato defined man thus: "Man is a two-footed, featherless animal;" and was much praised for the definition; so Diogenes plucked a cock and brought it into his school, and said, "This is Plato's man." On which account this addition was made to the definition, "With broad flat nails." A man once asked him what was the proper time for supper, and he made answer, "If you are a rich man, whenever you please; and if you are a poor man, whenever you can." When he was at Megara he saw some sheep carefully covered over with skins, and the children running about naked; and so he said, "It is better at Megara to be a man's ram, than his son." A man once struck him with a beam, and then said, "Take care." "What," said he, "are you going to strike me again?" He used to say that the demagogues were the servants of the people; and garlands the blossoms of glory. Having lighted a candle in the day time, he said, "I am looking for a man." On one occasion he stood under a fountain, and as the bystanders were pitying him, Plato, who was present, said to them, "If you wish really to show your pity for him, come away;" intimating that he was only acting thus out of a desire for notoriety. Once, when a man had struck him with his fist, he said, "O Hercules, what a strange thing that, I should be walking about with a helmet on without knowing it!"

XII. When Midias struck him with his fist and said, "There are three thousand drachmas for you;" the next day Diogenes took the cestus of a boxer and beat him soundly, and said, "There are three thousand drachmas for you." When Lysias, the drug-seller, asked him whether he thought that there were any Gods: "How," said he, "can I help thinking so, when I consider you to be hated by them?" but some attribute this reply to Theodorus. Once he saw a man purifying himself by washing, and said to him, "Oh, wretched man, do not you know that as you cannot wash away blunders in grammar by purification, so, too, you can no more efface the errors of a life in that same manner?"

Xiii. He used to say that men were wrong for complaining of fortune; for that they ask of the Gods what appear to be good things, not what are really so. And to those who were alarmed at

dreams he said, that they did not regard what they do while they are awake but make a great fuss about what they fancy they see while they are asleep. Once, at the Olympic games when the herald proclaimed "Dioxippus is the conqueror of men;" he said, "He is the conqueror of slaves, I am the conqueror of men."

XIV. Diogenes was greatly beloved by the Athenians; accordingly, when a youth had broken his cask they beat him, and gave Diogenes another. And Dionysius the Stoic, says that after the battle of Chaeronea he was taken prisoner and brought to Philip; and being asked who he was replied, "A spy, to spy upon your insatiability." And Philip marvelled at him and let him go. Once, when Alexander had sent a letter to Athens to Antipater, by the hands of a man named Athlias, he, being present, said, "Athlias from Athlius, by means of Athlias to Athlius. When Perdicas threatened that he would put him to death if he did not come to him, he replied, "That is nothing strange, for a scorpion or a tarantula could do as much: you had better threaten me that, if I kept away, you should be very happy." He used constantly to repeat with emphasis that an easy life had been given to man by the Gods, but that it had been overlaid by their seeking for honey, cheese-cakes, and unguents, and things of that sort. On which account he said to a man, who had his shoes put on by his servant, "You are not thoroughly happy, unless he also wipes your nose for you; and he will do this, if you are crippled in your hands." On one occasion, when he had seen the hieromnemes leading off one of the stewards who had stolen a goblet, he said, "The great thieves are carrying off the little thief." At another time, seeing a young man throwing stones at a cross, he said, "Well done, you will be sure to reach the mark." Once, too, some boys got round him and said, "We are taking care that you do not bite us;" but he said, "Be of good cheer, my boys, a dog does not eat beef." He saw a man giving himself airs because he was clad in a lion's skin, and said to him, "Do not go on disgracing the garb of nature." When people were speaking of the happiness of Callisthenes, and saying what splendid treatment he received from Alexander, he replied, "The man then is wretched, for he is forced to breakfast and dine whenever Alexander chooses." When he was in want of money, he said that he reclaimed it from his friends and did not beg for it.

XV. On one occasion Diogenes was working with his hands in the market-place, and said, "I wish I could rub my stomach in the same way, and so avoid hunger." When he saw a young man going with some satraps to supper, he dragged him away and led him off to his relations, and bade them take care of him. He was once addressed by a youth beautifully adorned, who asked him some question; and he refused to give him any answer, till he satisfied him whether he was a man or a woman. And on one occasion, when a youth was playing the cottabus in the bath, he said to him, "The better you do it, the worse you do it." Once at a banquet, some of the guests threw him bones, as if he had been a dog; so he, as he went away, put up his leg against them as if he had been a dog in reality. He used to call the orators, and all those who speak for fame *triganthrôpoi* (thrice men), instead of *trigathloi* (thrice miserable). He said that a rich but ignorant man, was like a sheep with a golden fleece. When he saw a notice on the house of a profligate man, "To be sold." "I knew," said he, "that you who are so incessantly drunk, would soon vomit up your owner." To a young man who was complaining of the number of people who sought his acquaintance, he said, "Do not make such a parade of your vanity."

XVI. Having been in a very dirty bath, he said, "I wonder where the people, who bathe here, clean themselves." When all the company was blaming an indifferent harp-player, he alone

praised him and being asked why he did so, he said, "Because, though he is such as he is, he plays the harp and does not steal." He saluted a harp player who was always left alone by his hearers, with, "Good morning, cock;" and when the man asked him, "Why so?" he said, "Because you, when you sing, make every one get up." When a young man was one day making a display of himself, he, having filled the bosom of his robe with lupins, began to eat them; and when the multitude looked at him, he said, "that he marvelled at their leaving the young man to look at him." And when a man, who was very superstitious, said to him, "With one blow I will break your head;" "And I," he replied, "with one sneeze will make you tremble." When Hegesias entreated him to lend him one of his books, he said, "You are a silly fellow, Hegesias, for you will not take painted figs, but real ones; and yet you overlook the genuine practice of virtue, and seek for what is merely written." A man once reproached him with his banishment, and his answer was, "You wretched man, that is what made me a philosopher." And when, on another occasion, some one said to him, "The people of Sinope condemned you to banishment," he replied, "And I condemned them to remain where they were." Once he saw a man who had been victor at the Olympic games, feeding (nemonta) sheep, and he said to him, "You have soon come across my friend from the Olympic games, to the Nemean." When he was asked why athletes are insensible to pain, he said, "Because they are built up of pork and beef."

XVII. He once asked for a statue ; and being questioned as to his reason for doing so, he said, "I am practising disappointment." Once he was begging of some one (for he did this at first out of actual want), he said, "If you have given to any one else, give also to me; and if you have never given to any one, then begin with me." On one occasion, he was asked by the tyrant, "What sort of brass was the best, for a statue?" and he replied, "That of which the statues of Harmodius and Aristogiton are made." When he was asked how Dionysius treats his friends, he said, "Like bags; those which are full he hangs up, and those which are empty he throws away." A man who was lately married put an inscription on his house, "Hercules Callinicus, the son of Jupiter, lives here; let no evil enter." And so Diogenes wrote in addition, "An alliance is made after the war is over." He used to say that covetousness was the metropolis of all evils. Seeing on one occasion a profligate man in an inn eating olives, he said, "If you had dined thus, you would not have supped thus." One of his apophthegms was, that good men were the images of the Gods; another, that love was the business of those who had nothing to do. When he was asked what was miserable in life, he answered, "An indigent old man." And when the question was put to him, what beast inflicts the worst bite, he said, "Of wild beasts the sycophant, and of tame animals the flatterer."