

DIOGENES OF SINOPE

Diogenes of Sinope (c. 412-323 BC), a contemporary of Plato and Aristotle, is considered the founder of the philosophical school of Cynicism. Concerned more with action than with words, he left no writings. What we know of his thought is what has been related to us by contemporaries and later scholars. The most extensive account is from Diogenes Laertes, writing almost 500 years after Diogenes lived.

LIFE OF DIOGENES OF SINOPE, THE CYNIC (404-323 BC)

BY DIOGENES LAERTIUS (3RD CENTURY AD)

Diogenes was a native of Sinope, son of Hicesius, a banker. Diocles relates that he went into exile because his father was entrusted with the money of the state and adulterated the coinage. But Eubulides in his book on Diogenes says that Diogenes himself did this and was forced to leave home along with his father. Moreover Diogenes himself actually confesses in his *Porde-lus* that he adulterated the coinage. Some say that having been appointed to superintend the workmen he was persuaded by them, and that he went to Delphi or to the Delian oracle in his own city and inquired of Apollo whether he should do what he was urged to do. When the god gave him permission to alter the political currency, not understanding what this meant, he adulterated the state coinage, and when he was detected, according to some he was banished, while according to others he voluntarily quitted the city for fear of consequences. One version is that his father entrusted him with the money and that he debased it, in consequence of which the father was imprisoned and died, while the son fled, came to Delphi, and inquired, not whether he should falsify the coinage, but what he should do to gain the greatest reputation; and that then it was that he received the oracle.

On reaching Athens he fell in with Antisthenes. Being repulsed by him, because he never welcomed pupils, by sheer persistence Diogenes wore him out. Once when he stretched out his staff against him, the pupil offered his head with the words, "Strike, for you will find no wood hard enough to keep me away from you, so long as I think you've something to say." From that time forward he was his pupil, and, exile as he was, set out upon a simple life.

Through watching a mouse running about, says Theophrastus in the Megarian dialogue, not looking for a place to lie down in, not afraid of the dark, not seeking any of the things which are considered to be dainties, he discovered the means of adapting himself to circumstances. He was the first, say some, to fold his cloak because he was obliged to sleep in it as well, and he carried a wallet to hold his victuals, and he used any place for any purpose, for breakfasting, sleeping, or conversing. And then he would say, pointing to the portico of Zeus and the Hall of Processions, that the Athenians had provided him with places to live in. He did not lean upon a staff until he grew infirm; but afterwards he would carry it everywhere, not indeed in the city, but when walking along the road with it and with his wallet; so say Olympiodorus, once a magistrate at Athens, Polyuctus the orator, and Lysanias the son of Aeschrio. He had written to some one to try and procure a cottage for him. When this man was a long time about it, he took for his abode the tub in the Metroon, as he himself explains in his letters. And in summer

he used to roll in it over hot sand, while in winter he used to embrace statues covered with snow, using every means of inuring himself to hardship.

He was great at pouring scorn on his contemporaries. The school of Euclides he called bilious, and Plato's lectures wastes of time, the performances at the Dionysia great peep-shows for fools, and the demagogues the mob's lackeys. He used also to say that when he saw physicians, philosophers and pilots at their work, he deemed man the most intelligent of all animals; but when again he saw interpreters of dreams and diviners and those who attended to them, or those who were puffed up with conceit of wealth, he thought no animal more silly. He would continually say that for the conduct of life we need right reason or a halter.

Observing Plato one day at a costly banquet taking olives, "How is it," he said, "that you the philosopher who sailed to Sicily for the sake of these dishes, now when they are before you do not enjoy them?" "Nay, by the gods, Diogenes," replied Plato, "there also for the most part I lived upon olives and such like." "Why then," said Diogenes, "did you need to go to Syracuse? Was it that Attica at that time did not grow olives?" But Favorinus in his *Miscellaneous History* attributes this to Aristippus. Again, another time he was eating dried figs when he encountered Plato and offered him a share of them. When Plato took them and ate them, he said, "I said you might share them, not that you might eat them all up."

And one day when Plato had invited to his house friends coming from Dionysius, Diogenes trampled upon his carpets and said, "I trample upon Plato's vainglory." Plato's reply was, "How much pride you expose to view, Diogenes, by seeming not to be proud." Others tell us that what Diogenes said was, "I trample upon the pride of Plato," who retorted, "Yes, Diogenes, with pride of another sort." Sotion, however, in his fourth book makes the Cynic address this remark to Plato himself. Diogenes once asked him for wine, and after that also for some dried figs; and Plato sent him a whole jar full. Then the other said, "If some one asks you how many two and two are, will you answer, Twenty? So, it seems, you neither give as you are asked nor answer as you are questioned." Thus he scoffed at him as one who talked without end.

Being asked where in Greece he saw good men, he replied, "Good men nowhere, but good boys at Lacedaemon."

When one day he was gravely discoursing and nobody attended to him, he began whistling, and as people clustered about him, he reproached them with coming in all seriousness to hear nonsense, but slowly and contemptuously when the theme was serious. He would say that men strive in digging and kicking to outdo one another, but no one strives to become a good man and true. And he would wonder that the grammarians should investigate the ills of Odysseus, while they were ignorant of their own. Or that the musicians should tune the strings of the lyre, while leaving the dispositions of their own souls discordant; that the mathematicians should gaze at the sun and the moon, but overlook matters close at hand; that the orators should make a fuss about justice in their speeches, but never practice it; or that the avaricious should cry out against money, while inordinately fond of it.

He used also to condemn those who praised honest men for being superior to money, while themselves envying the very rich. He was moved to anger that men should sacrifice to the gods to ensure health and in the midst of the sacrifice should feast to the detriment of health. He was astonished that when slaves saw their masters were gluttons, they did not steal some of the viands. He would praise those who were about to marry and refrained, those who intending to go a voyage never set sail, those who thinking to engage in politics do no such thing, those also who purposing to rear a family do not do so, and those who make ready to live with potentate, yet never come near them after all. He used to say, moreover, that we ought to stretch out our hands to our friends with the fingers open and not closed.

Menippus in his *Sale of Diogenes* tells how, when he was captured and put up for sale, he was asked what he could do. He replied, "Govern men." And he told the crier to give notice in case anybody wanted to purchase a master for himself. Having been forbidden to sit down, "It makes no difference," said he, "For in whatever position fishes lie, they still find purchasers." And he said he marveled that before we buy a jar or dish we try whether it rings true, but if it is a man are content merely to look at him. To Xenaiades who purchased him he said, "You must obey me, although I am a slave; for, if a physician or a steersman were in slavery, he would be obeyed." Eubulus in his book entitled *The Sele of Diogenes* tells us that this was how he trained the sons of Xenaiades. After their other studies he taught them to ride, to shoot with the bow, to sling stones and to hurl javelins. Later, when they reached the wrestling-school, he would not permit the master to give them full athletic training, but only so much as to heighten their colour and keep them in good condition.

The boys used to get by heart many passages from poets, historians, and the writings of Diogenes himself; and he would practice them in every short cut to a good memory. In the house too he taught them to wait upon themselves, and to be content with plain fare and water to drink. He used to make them crop their hair close and to wear it unadorned, and to go lightly clad, barefoot, silent, and not looking about them in the streets. He would also take them out hunting. They on their part had a great regard for Diogenes and made requests of their parents for him. The same Eubulus relates that he grew old in the house of Xenaiades, and when he died was buried by his sons. There Xenaiades once asked him how he wished to be buried. To which he replied, "On my face." "Why?" inquired the other. "Because," said he, "after a little time down will be converted into up." This because the Macedonians had now got the supremacy, that is, had risen high from a humble position.

Some one took him into a magnificent house and warned him not to expectorate, whereupon having cleared his throat he discharged the phlegm into the man's face, being unable, he said, to find a meaner receptacle. Others father this upon Aristippus. One day he shouted out for men, and when people collected, hit out at them with his stick, saying, "It was men I called for, not scoundrels." This is told by Hecato in the first book of his *Anecdotes*. Alexander is reported to have said, "Had I not been Alexander, I should have liked to be Diogenes."

The word "disabled" (Greek *anaperous*) Diogenes held, ought to be applied not to the deaf or blind, but to those who have no wallet (*pera*). One day he made his way with head half shaven

into a party of young revellers, as Metrocles relates in his *Anecdotes*, and was roughly handled by them. Afterwards he entered on a tablet the names of those who had struck him and went about with the tablet hung round his neck, till he had covered them with ridicule and brought universal blame and discredit upon them. He described himself as a hound of the sort which all men praise, but no one, he added, of his admirers dared go out hunting along with him.

When some one boasted that at the Pythian games he had vanquished men, Diogenes replied, "Nay, I defeat men, you defeat slaves."

To those who said to him, "You are an old man; take a rest," "What?" he replied, "if I were running in the stadium, ought I to slacken my pace when approaching the goal? Ought I not rather to put on speed?"

Having been invited to a dinner, he declared that he wouldn't go; for, the last time he went, his host had not expressed a proper gratitude. He would walk upon snow barefoot and do the other things mentioned above. Not only so; he even attempted to eat meat raw, but could not manage to digest it. He once found Demosthenes the orator lunching at an inn, and, when he retired within, Diogenes said, "All the more you will be inside the tavern." When some strangers expressed a wish to see Demosthenes, he stretched out his middle finger and said, "There goes the demagogue of Athens." Some one dropped a loaf of bread and was ashamed to pick it up; whereupon Diogenes, wishing to read him a lesson, tied a rope to the neck of a winejar and proceeded to drag it across the Ceramicus.

He used to say that he followed the example of the trainers of choruses; for they too set the note a little high, to ensure that the rest should hit the right note. Most people, he would say, are so nearly mad that a finger makes all the difference. For, if you go along with your middle finger stretched out, some one will think you mad, but, if it's the little finger, he will not think so. Very valuable things, said he, were bartered for things of no value, and *vice versa*. At all events a statue fetches three thousand drachmas, while a quart of barley-flour is sold for two copper coins.

To Xenocrates, who purchased him, he said, "Come, see that you obey orders." When he quoted the line, "Backward the streams flow to their founts," Diogenes asked, "If you had been ill and had purchased a doctor, would you then, instead of obeying him, have said "Backward the streams flow to their founts?"

Some one wanted to study philosophy under him. Diogenes gave him a tuna fish to carry and told him to follow him. And when for shame the man threw it away and departed, some time after on meeting him he laughed and said, "The friendship between you and me was broken by a tuna." The version given by Diocles, however, is as follows. Some one having said to him, "Lay your commands upon us, Diogenes," he took him away and gave him a cheese to carry, which cost half an obol. The other declined; whereupon he remarked, "The friendship between you and me is broken by a little cheese worth half an obol."

One day, observing a child drinking out of his hands, he cast away the cup from his wallet with the words, "A child has beaten me in plainness of living." He also threw away his bowl when in like manner he saw a child who had broken his plate taking up his lentils with the hollow part of a morsel of bread. He used also to reason thus: "All things belong to the gods. The wise are friends of the gods, and friends hold things in common. Therefore all things belong to the wise."

One day he saw a woman kneeling before the gods in an ungraceful attitude, and wishing to free her of superstition, according to Zoilus of Perga, he came forward and said, "Are you not afraid, my good woman, that a god may be standing behind you? –for all things are full of his presence—and you may be put to shame?" He dedicated to Asclepius a bruiser who, whenever people fell on their faces, used to run up to them and "bruise" them.

All the curses of tragedy, he used to say, had lighted upon him. At all events he was

A homeless exile, to *his* country dead.

A wanderer *who* begs his daily bread.

But he claimed that to fortune he could oppose courage, to convention nature, to passion reason. When he was sunning himself in the Craneum, Alexander came and stood over him and said, "Ask of me any boon you like." To which he replied, "Stand out of my light."

Some one had been reading aloud for a very long time, and when he was near the end of the roll pointed to a space with no writing on it. "Cheer up, my men," cried Diogenes; "there's land in sight." To one who by argument had proved conclusively that he had horns, he said, touching his forehead, "Well, I for my part don't see any." In like manner, when somebody declared that there is no such thing as motion, he got up and walked about.

When some one was discoursing on celestial phenomena, "How many days," asked Diogenes, "were you in coming from the sky?" A eunuch of bad character had inscribed on his door the words, "Let nothing evil enter." "How then," he asked, "is the master of the house to get in?"

When he had anointed his feet with unguent, he declared that from his head the unguent passed into the air, but from his feet into his nostrils. The Athenians urged him to become initiated, and told him that in the other world those who have been initiated enjoy a special privilege. "It would be ludicrous," quoth he, "if Agesilaus and Epaminondas are to dwell in the mire, while certain folk of no account will live in the Isles of the Blest because they have been initiated."

When mice crept on to the table he addressed them thus, "See now even Diogenes keeps parasites." When Plato styled him a dog, "Quite true," he said, "for I come back again and again to those who have sold me." As he was leaving the public baths, somebody inquired if many men were bathing. He said, No. But to another who asked if there was a great crowd of bathers, he said, Yes.

Plato had defined Man as an animal, biped and featherless, and was applauded. Diogenes plucked a fowl and brought it into the lecture-room with the words, "Here is Plato's man." In consequence of which there was added to the definition, "having broad nails." To one who asked what was the proper time for lunch, he said, "If a rich man, when you will; if a poor man when you can."

At Megara he saw the sheep protected by leather jackets, while the children went bare. "It's better," said he, "to be a Megarian's ram than his son." To one who had brandished a beam at him and then cried, "Look out," he replied, "What, are you intending to strike me again?"

He used to call the demagogues the lackeys of the people and the crowns awarded to them the efflorescence of fame. He lit a lamp in broad daylight and said, as he went about, "I am looking for a man." One day he got a thorough drenching where he stood, and, when the bystanders pitied him, Plato said, if they really pitied him, they should move away, alluding to his vanity. When someone hit him a blow with his fist, "Heracles," said he, "how came I to forget to put on a helmet when I walked out?" Further, when Meidias assaulted him and went on to say, "There are 3000 drachmas to your credit," the next day he took a pair of boxing-gauntlets, gave him a thrashing and said, "There are 3000 blows to your credit."

When Lysias the druggist asked him if he believed in the gods, "How can I help believing in them," said he, "when I see a god-forsaken wretch like you?" Others give this retort to Theodorus. Seeing some one perform religious purification, he said, "Unhappy man, don't you know that you can no more get rid of errors of conduct by sprinklings than you can of mistakes in grammar." He would rebuke men in general with regard to their prayers, declaring that they asked for those things which seemed to them to be good, not for such as are truly good. As for those who were excited over their dreams he would say that they cared nothing for what they did in their waking hours, but kept their curiosity for the visions called up in their sleep. At Olympia, when the herald proclaimed Dioxippus to be victor over the men, Diogenes protested, "Nay, he is victorious over slaves, I over men."

Still he was loved by the Athenians. At all events, when a youngster broke up his tub, they gave the boy a flogging and presented Diogenes with another. Dionysius the Stoic says that after Chaeronea he was seized and dragged off to Philip, and being asked who he was, replied, "A spy upon your insatiable greed." For this he was admired and set free.

Alexander having on one occasion sent a letter to Antipater at Athens by a certain Athlios, Diogenes, who was present, said:

Graceless son of graceless sire to graceless wight by graceless squire.

Perdiccas having threatened to put him to death unless he came to him, "That's nothing wonderful," quoth he, "for a beetle or a tarantula would do the same." Instead of that he would have expected the threat to be that Perdiccas would be quite happy to do without his company. He would often insist loudly that the gods had given to men the means of living easily, but this

had been put out of sight, because we require honeyed cakes, unguents and the like. Hence to a man whose shoes were being put on by his servant, he said, "You have not attained to full felicity, unless he wipes your nose as well; and that will come, when you have lost the use of your hands."

Once he saw the officials of a temple leading away some one who had stolen a bowl belonging to the treasurers, and said, "The great thieves are leading away the little thief." Noticing a lad one day throwing stones at a cross (gibbet), "Well done," he said, "you will hit your mark." When some boys clustered round him and said, "Take care he doesn't bite us," he answered, "Never fear, boys, a dog does not eat beetroot." To one who was proud of wearing a lion's skin his words were, "Leave off dishonouring the habiliments of courage." When some one was extolling the good fortune of Callisthenes and saying what splendour he shared in the suite of Alexander, "Not so," said Diogenes, "but rather ill fortune; for he breakfasts and dines when Alexander thinks fit."

Being short of money, he told his friends that he applied to them not for alms, but for repayment of his due. When behaving indecently [masturbating] in the marketplace, he wished it were as easy to relieve hunger by rubbing an empty stomach. Seeing a youth starting off to dine with satraps, he dragged him off, took him to his friends and bade them keep strict watch over him. When a youth effeminate attired put a question to him, he declined to answer unless he pulled up his robe and showed whether he was man or woman. A youth was playing cottabos in the baths. Diogenes said to him, "The better you play, the worse it is for you." At a feast certain people kept throwing all the bones to him as they would have done to a dog. Thereupon he played a dog's trick and drenched them.

Rhetoricians and all who talked for reputation he used to call "thrice human," meaning thereby "thrice wretched." An ignorant rich man he used to call "the sheep with the golden fleece." Seeing a notice on the house of a profligate, "To be sold," he said, "I knew well that after such surfeiting you would throw up the owner." To a young man who complained of the number of people who annoyed him by their attentions he said, "Cease to hang out a sign of invitation." Of a public bath which was dirty he said, "When people have bathed here, where are they to go to get clean." There was a stout musician whom everybody depreciated and Diogenes alone praised. When asked why, he said, "Because being so big, he yet sings to his lute and does not turn brigand."

The musician who was always deserted by his audience he greeted with a "Hail chanticler, and when asked why he so addressed him, replied, "Because your song makes every one get up." A young man was delivering a set speech, when Diogenes, having filled the front fold of his dress with lupine, began to eat them, standing right opposite to him. Having thus drawn off the attention of the assemblage, he said he was greatly surprised that they should desert the orator to look at himself. A very superstitious person addressed him thus, "With one blow I will break your head." "And I," said Diogenes, "by a sneeze from the left will make you tremble." Hegesias having asked him to lend him one of his writings, he said, "You are a simpleton, Hegesias; you

do not choose painted figs, but real ones; and yet you pass over the true training and would apply yourself to written rules.”

When some one reproached him with his exile, his reply was, “Nay, it was through that, you miserable fellow, that I came to be a philosopher.” Again, when some one reminded him that the people of Sinope had sentenced him to exile, “And I them,” said he, “to home-staying.” Once he saw an Olympic victor tending sheep and thus accosted him: “Too quickly, my good friend, have you left Olympia for Nemea.” Being asked why athletes are so stupid, his answer was, “Because they are built up of pork and beef.” He once begged alms of a statue, and, when asked why he did so, replied, “To get practice in being refused.” In asking alms – as he did at first by reason of his poverty – he used this form: “If you have already given to anyone else, give to me also; if not, begin with me.”

On being asked by a tyrant what bronze is best for a statue, he replied, “That of which Harmodius and Aristogiton were moulded.” Asked how Dionysius treated his friends, “Like purses,” he replied; “so long as they are full, he hangs them up, and, when they are empty, he throws them away.” Some one lately wed had set up on his door the notice:

The son of Zeus, victorious Heracles, dwells here; let nothing evil enter in.

To which Diogenes added “After war, alliance.” The love of money he declared to be mother-city of all evils. Seeing a spendthrift eating olives in a tavern, he said, “If you had breakfasted in this fashion, you would not so be dining.”

Good men he called images of the gods, and love the business of the idle. To the question what is wretched in life he replied, “An old man destitute.” Being asked what creature’s bite is the worst, he said, “Of those that are wild a sycophant’s; of those that are tame a flatterer’s.” Upon seeing two centaurs very badly painted, he asked, “Which of these is Chiron? “ (“Cheiron” in Greek means “worse man”). Ingratiating speech he compared to honey used to choke you. The stomach he called livelihood’s Charybdis. Hearing a report that Didymon the flute-player had been caught in adultery, his comment was, “His name alone is sufficient to hang him.” To the question why gold is pale, his reply was, “Because it has so many thieves plotting against it.” On seeing a woman carried in a litter, he remarked that the cage was not in keeping with the quarry.

One day seeing a runaway slave sitting on the brink of a well, he said, “Take care, my lad, you don’t fall in.” Seeing a boy taking clothes at the baths, he asked, “Is it for a little unguent (*alleimnation*) or is it for a new cloak (*all’ himation*)?” Seeing some women hanged from an olive-tree, he said, “Would that every tree bore similar fruit.” On seeing a footpad he accosted him thus:

What mak’st thou here, my gallant?
Com’st thou perchance for plunder of the dead?

Being asked whether he had any maid or boy to wait on him, he said “No.” “If you should die, then, who will carry you out to burial?” “Whoever wants the house,” he replied.

Noticing a good-looking youth lying in an exposed position, he nudged him and cried, “Up, man, up, lest some foe thrust a dart into thy back!” To one who was feasting lavishly he said:

Short-liv’d thou’lt be, my son, by what thou–buy’st.

As Plato was conversing about Ideas and using the nouns “tablehood” and “cuphood,” he said, “Table and cup I see; but your tablehood and cuphood, Plato, I can nowise see.” “That’s readily accounted for,” said Plato, “for you have the eyes to see the visible table and cup; but not the understanding by which ideal tablehood and cuphood are discerned.”

On being asked by somebody, “What sort of a man do you consider Diogenes to be?” “A Socrates gone mad,” said Plato. On being asked what was the right time to marry, Diogenes replied, “For a young man not yet: for an old man never at all.” Being asked what he would take to be soundly cuffed, he replied, “A helmet.” Seeing a youth dressing with elaborate care, he said, “If it’s for men, you’re a fool; if for women, a knave.” One day he detected a youth blushing. “Courage,” quoth he, “that is the hue of virtue.” One day after listening to a couple of lawyers disputing, he condemned them both, saying that the one had no doubt stolen, but the other had not lost anything. To the question what wine he found pleasant to drink, he replied, “That for which other people pay.” When he was told that many people laughed at him, he made an answer, “But I am not laughed down.”

When some one declared that life is an evil, he corrected him: “Not life itself, but living ill.” When he was advised to go in pursuit of his runaway slave, he replied, “It would be absurd, if Manes can live without Diogenes, but Diogenes cannot get on without Manes.” When breakfasting on olives amongst which a cake had been inserted, he flung it away and addressed it thus:

Stranger, betake thee from the princes’ path. (Euripides Phoen. 40)

And on another occasion thus:

He lashed an olive. (Homer Iliad 5.366)

Being asked what kind of hound he was, he replied, “When hungry, a Maltese; when full, a Molossian – two breeds which most people praise, though for fear of fatigue they do not venture out hunting with them. So neither can you live with me, because you are afraid of the discomforts.”

Being asked if the wise eat cakes, “Yes,” he said, “cakes of all kinds, just like other men.” Being asked why people give to beggars but not to philosophers, he said, “Because they think they may one day be lame or blind, but never expect that they will turn to philosophy.” He was beg-

ging of a miserly man who was slow to respond; so he said, "My friend, it's for food that I'm asking, not for funeral expenses." Being reproached one day for having falsified the currency, he said, "That was the time when I was such as you are now; but such as I am now, you will never be." To another who reproached him for the same offence he made a more scurrilous repartee.

On coming to Myndus and finding the gates large, though the city itself was very small, he cried, "Men of Myndus, bar your gates, lest the city should run away." Seeing a man who had been caught stealing purple, he said:

Fast gripped by purple death and forceful fate. (Homer Iliad 5.83)

When Craterus wanted him to come and visit him, "No," he replied, "I would rather live on a few grains of salt at Athens than enjoy sumptuous fare at Craterus's table." He went up to Anaximenes the rhetorician, who was fat, and said, "Let us beggars have something of your paunch; it will be a relief to you, and we shall get advantage." And when the same man was discoursing, Diogenes distracted his audience by producing some salt fish. This annoyed the lecturer, and Diogenes said, "An obol's worth of salt fish has broken up Anaximenes' lecture-class."

Being reproached for eating in the market-place "Well, it was in the market-place," he said, "that I felt hungry." Some authors affirm that the following also belongs to him: that Plato saw him washing lettuces, came up to him and quietly said to him, "Had you paid court to Dionysius, you wouldn't now be washing lettuces," and that he with equal calmness made answer, "If you had washed lettuces, you wouldn't have paid court to Dionysius." When some one said, "Most people laugh at you," his reply was, "And so very likely do the asses at them; but as they don't care for the asses, so neither do I care for them." One day observing a youth studying philosophy, he said, "Well done, Philosophy, that thou divertest admirers of bodily charms to the real beauty of the soul."

When some one expressed astonishment at the votive offerings in Samothrace, his comment was, "There would have been far more, if those who were not saved had set up offerings." But others attribute this remark to Diagoras of Melos. To a handsome youth, who was going out to dinner, he said, "You will come back a worse man." When he came back and said next day, "went and am none the worse for it," Diogenes said, "Not Worse-man (Chiron), but Lax-man (Eurytion)." He was asking alms of a bad-tempered man, who said, "Yes, if you can persuade me." "If I could have persuaded you," said Diogenes, "I would have persuaded you to hang yourself." He was returning from Lacedaemon to Athens; and on some one asking, "Whither and whence?" he replied, "From the men's apartments to the women's."

He was returning from Olympia, and when somebody inquired whether there was a great crowd, "Yes," he said, "a great crowd, but few who could be called men." Libertines he compared to fig trees growing upon a cliff: whose fruit is not enjoyed by any man, but is eaten by

ravens and vultures. When Phryne set up a golden statue of Aphrodite in Delphi, Diogenes is said to have written upon it: "From the licentiousness of Greece."

Alexander once came and stood opposite him and said, "I am Alexander the great king." "And I," said he, "am Diogenes the Cynic." Being asked what he had done to be called a hound, he said, "I fawn on those who give me anything, I yelp at those who refuse, and I set my teeth in rascals."

He was gathering figs, and was told by the keeper that not long before a man had hanged himself on that very fig-tree. "Then," said he, "I will now purge it." Seeing an Olympian victor casting repeated glances at a courtesan, "See," he said, "yonder ram frenzied for battle, how he is held fast by the neck fascinated by a common minx." Handsome courtesans he would compare to a deadly honeyed potion. He was breakfasting in the marketplace, and the bystanders gathered round him with cries of "dog." "It is you who are dogs," cried he, "when you stand round and watch me at my breakfast." When two cowards hid away from him, he called out, "Don't be afraid, a hound is not fond of beetroot." After seeing a stupid wrestler practising as a doctor he inquired of him, "What does this mean? Is it that you may now have your revenge on the rivals who formerly beat you?" "Seeing the child of a courtesan throw stones at a crowd, he cried out, "Take care you don't hit your father."

A boy having shown him a dagger that he had received from an admirer, Diogenes remarked, "A pretty blade with an ugly handle." When some people commended a person who had given him a gratuity, he broke in with "You have no praise for me who was worthy to receive it." When some one asked that he might have back his cloak, "If it was a gift," replied Diogenes, "I possess it; while, if it was a loan, I am using it." A supposititious vent having told him that he had gold in the pocket of his dress, "True," said he, "and therefore you sleep with it under your pillow." On being asked what he had gained from philosophy, he replied, "This at least, if nothing else – to be prepared for every fortune." Asked where he came from, he said, "I am a citizen of the world."

Certain parents were sacrificing to the gods, that a son might be born to them. "But," said he, "do you not sacrifice to ensure what manner of man he shall turn out to be?" When asked for a subscription towards a club, he said to the president:

Despoil the rest; off Heetor keep thy hands.

The mistresses of kings he designated queens; for, said he, they make the kings do their bidding. When the Athenians gave Alexander the title of Dionysus, he said, "Me too you might make Sarapis." Some one having reproached him for going into dirty places, his reply was that the sun too visits cesspools without being defiled.

When he was dining in a temple, and in the course of the meal loaves not free from dirt were put on the table, he took them up and threw them away, declaring that nothing unclean ought to enter a temple. To the man who said to him, "You don't know anything, although you are a

philosopher," he replied, "Even if I am but a pretender to wisdom, that in itself is philosophy." When some one brought a child to him and declared him to be highly gifted and of excellent character, "What need then," said he, "has he of me?" Those who say admirable things, but fail to do them, he compared to a harp; for the harp, like them, he said, has neither hearing nor perception. He was going into a theatre, meeting face to face those who were coming out, and being asked why, "This," he said, "is what I practice doing all my life."

Seeing a young man behaving effeminately, "Are you not ashamed," he said, "that your own intention about yourself should be worse than nature's: for nature made you a man, but you are forcing yourself to play the woman." Observing a fool tuning a psaltery, "Are you not ashamed," said he, "to give this wood concordant sounds, while you fail to harmonize your soul with life?" To one who protested that he was ill adapted for the study of philosophy, he said, "Why then do you live, if you do not care to live well?" To one who despised his father, "Are you not ashamed," he said, to despise him to whom you owe it that you can so pride yourself?" Noticing a handsome youth chattering in unseemly fashion, "Are you not ashamed," he said, "to draw a dagger of lead from an ivory scabbard?"

Being reproached with drinking in a tavern, "Well," said he, "I also get my hair cut in a barber's shop." Being reproached with accepting a cloak from Antipater, he replied:

The gods' choice gifts are nowise to be spurned.

When some one first shook a beam at him and then shouted "Look out," Diogenes struck the man with his staff and added "Look out." To a man who was urgently pressing his suit to a courtesan he said, "Why, hapless man, are you at such pains to gain your suit, when it would be better for you to lose it?" To one with perfumed hair he said, "Beware lest the sweet scent on your head cause an ill odour in your life." He said that bad men obey their lusts as servants obey their masters.

The question being asked why footmen are so called, he replied, "Because they have the feet of men, but souls such as you, my questioner, have." He asked a spendthrift for a mine. The man inquired why it was that he asked others for an obol but him for a mine. "Because," said Diogenes, "I expect to receive from others again, but whether I shall ever get anything from you again lies on the knees of the gods." Being reproached with begging when Plato did not beg, "Oh yes," says he, "he does, but when he does so—He holds his head down close, that none may hear."

Seeing a bad archer, he sat down beside the target with the words "in order not to get hit." Lovers, he declared, derive their pleasures from their misfortune.

Being asked whether death was an evil thing, he replied, "How can it be evil, when in its presence we are not aware of it?" When Alexander stood opposite him and asked, "Are you not afraid of me?" "Why, what are you?" said he, "a good thing or a bad?" Upon Alexander replying "A good thing," "Who then," said Diogenes, "is afraid of the good?" Education, according to

him, is a controlling grace to the young, consolation to the old, wealth to the poor, and ornament to the rich. When Didymon, who was a rake, was once treating a girl's eye, "Beware," says Diogenes, "lest the oculist instead of curing the eye should ruin the pupil." On somebody declaring that his own friends were plotting against him, Diogenes exclaimed, "What is to be done then, if you have to treat friends and enemies alike?"

Being asked what was the most beautiful thing in the world, he replied, "Freedom of speech."

On entering a boys' school, he found there many statues of the Muses, but few pupils. "By the help of the gods," said he, "schoolmaster, you have plenty of pupils." It was his habit to do everything in public, the works of Demeter and of Aphrodite alike. He used to draw out the following arguments. "If to breakfast be not absurd, neither is it absurd in the market-place; but to breakfast is not absurd, therefore it is not absurd to breakfast in the marketplace." Behaving indecently in public, he wished "it were as easy to banish hunger by rubbing the belly." Many other sayings are attributed to him, which it would take long to enumerate.

He used to affirm that training was of two kinds, mental and bodily: the latter being that whereby, with constant exercise, perceptions are formed such as secure freedom of movement for virtuous deeds; and the one half of this training is incomplete without the other, good health and strength being just as much included among the essential things, whether for body or soul. And he would adduce indisputable evidence to show how easily from gymnastic training we arrive at virtue. For in the manual crafts and other arts it can be seen that the craftsmen develop extraordinary manual skill through practice. Again, take the case of flute-players and of athletes: what surpassing skill they acquire by their own incessant toil; and, if they had transferred their efforts to the training of the mind, how certainly their labours would not have been unprofitable or ineffective.

Nothing in life, however, he maintained, has any chance of succeeding without strenuous practice; and this is capable of overcoming anything. Accordingly, instead of useless toils men should choose such as nature recommends, whereby they might have lived happily. Yet such is their madness that they choose to be miserable. For even the despising of pleasure is itself most pleasurable, when we are habituated to it; and just as those accustomed to a life of pleasure feel disgust when they pass over to the opposite experience, so those whose training has been of the opposite kind derive more pleasure from despising pleasure than from the pleasures themselves. This was the gist of his conversation; and it was plain that he acted accordingly, adulterating currency in very truth, allowing convention no such authority as he allowed to natural right, and asserting that the manner of life he lived was the same as that of Heracles when he preferred liberty to everything.

He maintained that all things are the property of the wise, and employed such arguments as those cited above. All things belong to the gods. The gods are friends to the wise and friends share all property in common; therefore all things are the property of the wise. Again as to law: that it is impossible for society to exist without law; for without a city no benefit can be derived from that which is civilized. But the city is civilized, and there is no advantage in law without a

city; therefore law is something civilized. He would ridicule good birth and fame and all such distinctions, calling them showy ornaments of vice. The only true commonwealth was, he said, that which is as wide as the universe. He advocated community of wives, recognizing no other marriage than a union of the man who persuades with the woman who consents. And for this reason he thought sons too should be held in common.

And he saw no impropriety either in stealing anything from a temple or in eating the flesh of any animal; nor even anything impious in touching human flesh, this, he said, being clear from the custom of some foreign nations. Moreover, according to right reason, as he put it, all elements are contained in all things and pervade everything: since not only is meat a constituent of bread, but bread of vegetables; and all other bodies also, by means of certain invisible passages and particles, find their way in and unite with all substances in the form of vapour. This he makes plain in the *Thyestes*, if the tragedies are really his and not the work of his friend Philiscus of Aegina or of Pasiphon, the son of Lucian, a who according to Favorinus in his *Miscellaneous History* wrote them after the death of Diogenes. He held that we should neglect music, geometry, astronomy, and the like studies, as useless and unnecessary.

He became very ready also at repartee in verbal debates, as is evident from what has been said above.

Further, when he was sold as a slave, he endured it most nobly. For on a voyage to Aegina he was captured by pirates under the command of Scirpalus, conveyed to Crete and exposed for sale. When the auctioneer asked in what he was proficient, he replied, "In ruling men." Thereupon he pointed to a certain Corinthian with a fine purple border to his robe, the man named Xeniadēs above-mentioned, and said, "Sell me to this man; he needs a master." Thus Xeniadēs came to buy him, and took him to Corinth and set him over his own children and entrusted his whole household to him. And he administered it in all respects in such a manner that Xeniadēs used to go about saying, "A good genius has entered my house."

Cleomenes in his work entitled *Concerning Pedagogues* says that the friends of Diogenes wanted to ransom him, whereupon he called them simpletons; for, said he, lions are not the slaves of those who feed them, but rather those who feed them are at the mercy of the lions: for fear is the mark of the slave, whereas wild beasts make men afraid of them. The man had in fact a wonderful gift of persuasion, so that he could easily vanquish anyone he liked in argument. At all events a certain Onesieritus of Aegina is said to have sent to Athens the one of his two sons named Androsthēnes, and he having become a pupil of Diogenes stayed there; the father then sent the other also, the aforesaid Philiscus, who was the elder, in search of him; but Philiscus also was detained in the same way. When, thirdly, the father himself arrived, he was just as much attracted to the pursuit of philosophy as his sons and joined the circle – so magical was the spell which the discourses of Diogenes exerted. Amongst his hearers was Phocion surnamed the Honest, and Stilpo the Megarian, and many other men prominent in political life.

Diogenes is said to have been nearly ninety years old when he died. Regarding his death there are several different accounts. One is that he was seized with colic after eating an octopus raw

and so met his end. Another is that he died voluntarily by holding his breath. This account was followed by Cercidas of Megalopolis (or of Crete), who in his meliambics writes thus:

Not so he who aforesaid was a citizen of Sinope,
That famous one who carried a staff, doubled his cloak, and lived in the open air.
But he soared aloft with his lip tightly pressed against his teeth
And holding his breath withal. For in truth he was rightly named
Diogenes, a true-born son of Zeus, a hound of heaven.

Another version is that, while trying to divide an octopus amongst the dogs, he was so severely bitten on the sinew of the foot that it caused his death. His friends, however, according to Antisthenes in his *Successors of Philosophers*, conjectured that it was due to the retention of his breath. For he happened to be living in the Craneum, the gymnasium in front of Corinth. When his friends came according to custom and found him wrapped up in his cloak, they thought that he must be asleep, although he was by no means of a drowsy or somnolent habit. They therefore drew aside his cloak and found that he was dead. This they supposed to have been his deliberate act in order to escape thenceforward from life.

Hence, it is said, arose a quarrel among his disciples as to who should bury him: nay, they even came to blows; but, when their fathers and men of influence arrived, under their direction he was buried beside the gate leading to the Isthmus. Over his grave they set up a pillar and a dog in Parian marble upon it. Subsequently his fellow-citizens honoured him with bronze statues, on which these verses were inscribed:

Time makes even bronze grow old: but thy glory Diogenes, all eternity will never
destroy. Since thou alone didst point out to mortals the lesson of self-sufficiency
and the easiest path of life.

Source: Diogenes Laertius. Lives of Eminent Philosophers. Vol. 2. Trans. R. D. Hicks. London, William Heinemann, 1925.