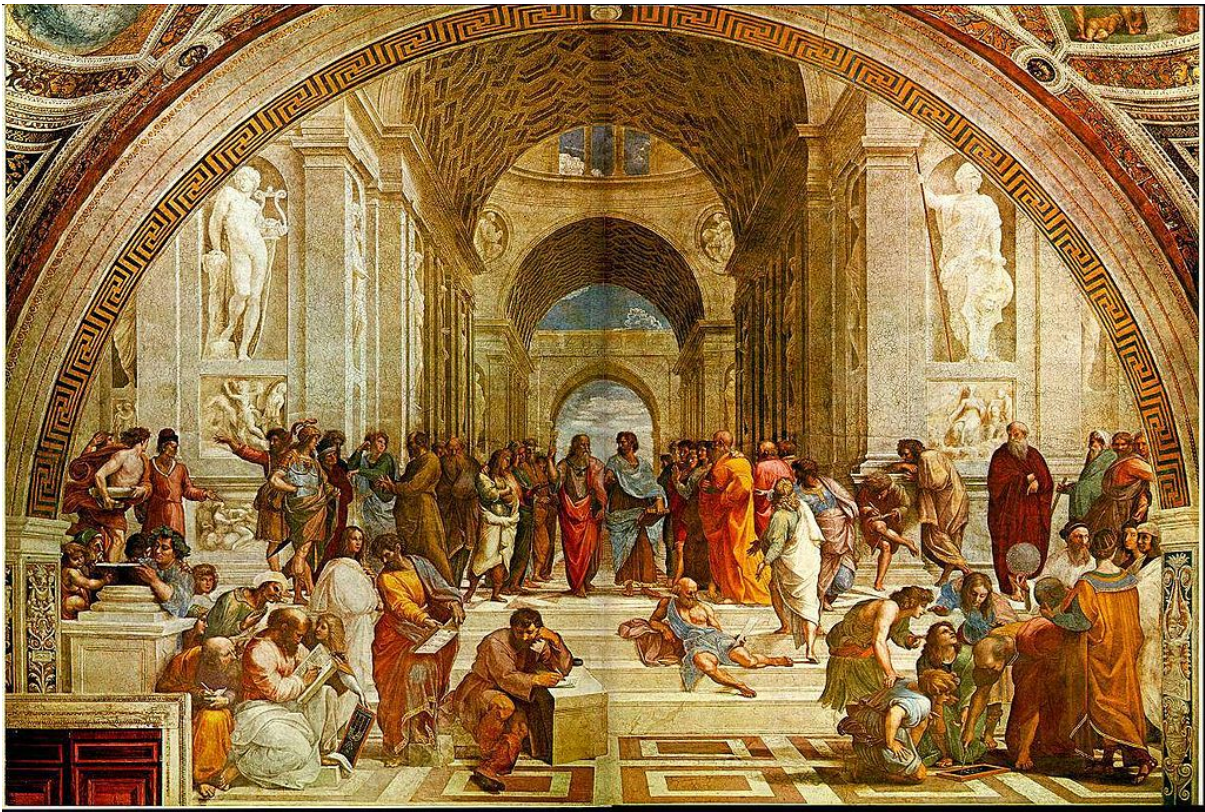


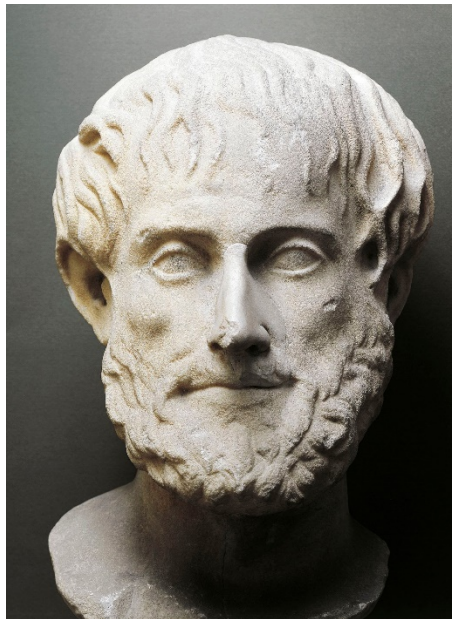
BELLARIA LXXXVII



School of Athens (Raphael)

Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*

IV ARISTOTLE (384-322 BC)



Introduction

Aristotle, one of the most brilliant thinkers to have walked this planet, hardly needs one. It is not surprising that his sayings are, for the most part, a cut above most of the others who have appeared in this series.

Lying, pity, maths and laws

17 Some exceedingly fine sayings are attributed to him, which I proceed to quote. To the question, 'What do people gain by telling lies?' his answer was, 'Just this, that when they speak the truth they are not believed.' Being once reproached for giving alms to a bad man, he rejoined, 'It was the man and not his character that I pitied.' He used constantly to say to his friends and pupils, wherever or whenever he happened to be lecturing, 'As sight takes in light from the surrounding air, so does the soul from mathematics.' Frequently and at some length he would say that the Athenians were the discoverers of wheat and of laws; but, though they used wheat, they had no use for laws.

17 Αναφέρεται δ' εἰς αὐτὸν καὶ ἀποφθέγματα κάλλιστα ταυτί. ἐρωτηθεὶς τί περιγίνεται κέρδος τοῖς ψευδομένοις, 'ὅταν,' ἔφη, 'λέγωσιν ἀληθῆ, μὴ πιστεύεσθαι.' ὀνειδιζόμενός ποτε ὅτι πονηρῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἔλεημοσύνην ἔδωκεν, 'οὐ τὸν τρόπον,' εἶπεν, 'ἀλλὰ τὸν ἀνθρωπὸν ἠλέησα.' συνεχῆς εἰώθει λέγειν πρὸς τε τοὺς φίλους καὶ τοὺς φοιτῶντας αὐτῷ, ἔνθα ἂν καὶ ὅπου διατρίβων ἔτυχεν, ὡς ἡ μὲν ὄρασις ἀπὸ τοῦ περιέχοντος ἀέρος λαμβάνει τὸ φῶς, ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων. πολλάκις δὲ καὶ ἀποτεινόμενος τοὺς Ἀθηναίους ἔφασκεν εὐρηκέναι πυροὺς καὶ νόμους· ἀλλὰ πυροῖς μὲν χρῆσθαι, νόμοις δὲ μή.

Education, gratitude, hope, figs, abuse, beauty



18 'The roots of education,' he said, 'are bitter, but the fruit is sweet.' Being asked, 'What is it that soon grows old?' he answered, 'Gratitude.' He was asked to define hope, and he replied, 'It is a waking dream.' When Diogenes offered him dried figs, he saw that he had prepared something caustic to say if he did not take them; so he took them and said Diogenes had lost his figs and his jest into the bargain. And on another occasion he took them when they were offered, lifted them up aloft, as you do babies, and returned them with the exclamation, 'Great is Diogenes.' Three things he declared to be indispensable for education: natural endowment, study, and constant practice. On hearing that someone abused him, he rejoined, 'Let him

flog me—in my absence.’ Beauty he declared to be a greater recommendation than any letter of introduction.

18 Τῆς παιδείας ἔφη τὰς μὲν ρίζας εἶναι πικράς, τὸν δὲ καρπὸν γλυκύν. ἐρωτηθεὶς τί γηράσκει ταχὺ, ‘χάρις,’ ἔφη. ἐρωτηθεὶς τί ἐστὶν ἔλπις, ‘ἐγρηγορότος,’ εἶπεν, ‘ἐνύπνιον.’ Διογένης ἰσχάδ’ αὐτῷ διδόντος νοήσας ὅτι, εἰ μὴ λάβοι, χρεῖαν εἶη μεμελετηκώς, λαβὼν ἔφη Διογένην μετὰ τῆς χρεῖας καὶ τὴν ἰσχάδα ἀπολωλεκέναι· πάλιν τε διδόντος λαβὼν καὶ μετεωρίσας ὡς τὰ παιδία εἰπὼν τε ‘μέγας Διογένης,’ ἀπέδωκεν αὐτῷ. τριῶν ἔφη δεῖν παιδεία, φύσεως, μαθήσεως, ἀσκήσεως. ἀκούσας ὑπὸ τινος λοιδορεῖσθαι, ‘ἀπόντα με,’ ἔφη, ‘καὶ μαστιγούτω.’ τὸ κάλλος παντὸς ἔλεγεν ἐπιστολίου συστατικώτερον.

Good looks, the (un)educated, city or country?



19 Others attribute that maxim to Diogenes; Aristotle, they say, defined good looks as the gift of god, Socrates as a short-lived reign, Plato as natural superiority, Theophrastus as a mute deception, Theocritus as an evil in an ivory setting, Carneades as a monarchy that needs no bodyguard. Being asked how the educated differ from the uneducated, ‘As much,’ he said, ‘as the living from the dead.’ He used to declare education to be an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity. Teachers who educated children deserved, he said, more honour than parents who merely gave them birth; for bare life is furnished by the one, the other ensures a good life. To one who boasted that he belonged to a great city his reply was, ‘That is not the point to consider, but who it is that is worthy of a great country.’

19 οἱ δὲ οὕτω μὲν Διογένην φασὶν ὀρίσασθαι, αὐτὸν δὲ θεοῦ δῶρον εἰπεῖν εὐμορφίαν· Σωκράτην δὲ ὀλιγοχρόνιον τυραννίδα· Πλάτωνα προτέρημα φύσεως· Θεόφραστον σιωπῶσαν ἀπάτην· Θεόκριτον ἐλεφαντίνην ζημίαν· Καρνεάδην ἀδορυφόρητον βασιλείαν. ἐρωτηθεὶς τίνοι διαφέρουσιν οἱ πεπαιδευμένοι τῶν ἀπαιδευτῶν, ‘ὅσῳ,’ εἶπεν, ‘οἱ ζῶντες τῶν τεθνεώτων.’ τὴν παιδείαν ἔλεγεν ἐν μὲν ταῖς εὐτυχίαις εἶναι κόσμον, ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἀτυχίαις καταφυγήν. τῶν γονέων τοὺς παιδεύσαντας ἐντιμότερους εἶναι τῶν μόνον

γεννησάντων· τοὺς μὲν γὰρ τὸ ζῆν, τοὺς δὲ τὸ καλῶς ζῆν παρασχέσθαι. πρὸς τὸν καυχώμενον ὡς ἀπὸ μεγάλης πόλεως εἶη, ‘οὐ τοῦτο,’ ἔφη, ‘δεῖ σκοπεῖν, ἀλλ’ ὅστις μεγάλης πατρίδος ἄξιός ἐστιν.’

Friends, mankind, beauty, philosophy, students, bores

20 To the query, ‘What is a friend?’ his reply was, ‘A single soul dwelling in two bodies.’ Mankind, he used to say, were divided into those who were as thrifty as if they would live for ever, and those who were as extravagant as if they were going to die the next day. When someone inquired why we spend much time with the beautiful, ‘That,’ he said, ‘is a blind man’s question.’ When asked what advantage he had ever gained from philosophy, he replied, ‘This, that I do without being ordered what some are constrained to do by their fear of the law.’ The question being put, how can students make progress, he replied, ‘By pressing hard on those in front and not waiting for those behind.’ To the chatterbox who poured out a flood of talk upon him and then inquired, ‘Have I bored you to death with my chatter?’ he replied, ‘No, indeed; for I was not attending to you.’

20 ἐρωτηθεὶς τί ἐστι φίλος, ἔφη, ‘μία ψυχὴ δύο σώμασιν ἐνοικοῦσα.’ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἔλεγε τοὺς μὲν οὕτω φεῖδεσθαι ὡς ἀεὶ ζησομένους, τοὺς δὲ οὕτως ἀναλίσκειν ὡς αὐτίκα τεθνηξομένους. πρὸς τὸν πυθόμενον διὰ τί τοῖς καλοῖς πολὺν χρόνον ὁμιλοῦμεν, ‘τυφλοῦ,’ ἔφη, ‘τὸ ἐρώτημα.’ ἐρωτηθεὶς τί ποτ’ αὐτῷ περιγέγονεν ἐκ φιλοσοφίας, ἔφη, ‘τὸ ἀνεπιτάκτως ποιεῖν ἅ τινες διὰ τὸν ἀπὸ τῶν νόμων φόβον ποιοῦσιν.’ ἐρωτηθεὶς πῶς ἂν προκόπτοιεν οἱ μαθηταί, ἔφη, ‘ἐὰν τοὺς προέχοντας διώκοντες τοὺς ὑστεροῦντας μὴ ἀναμένωσι.’ πρὸς τὸν εἰπόντα ἀδολέσχην, ἐπειδὴ αὐτοῦ πολλὰ κατήντησε, ‘μήτι σου κατεφλυάρησα;’ ‘μὰ Δί’,’ εἶπεν· ‘οὐ γὰρ σοι προσεῖχον.’

Gifts, friends, justice, education, friends

21 When someone accused him of having given a subscription to a dishonest man—for the story is also told in this form—‘It was not the man,’ said he, ‘that I assisted, but humanity.’ To the question how we should behave to friends, he answered, ‘As we should wish them to behave to us.’ Justice he defined as a virtue of soul which distributes according to merit. Education he declared to be the best provision for old age. Favorinus mentions as one of his habitual sayings that ‘He who has friends can have no true friend.’

21...πρὸς τὸν αἰτιασάμενον ὡς εἶη μὴ ἀγαθῷ ἔρανον δεδωκώς—φέρεται γὰρ καὶ οὕτως—‘οὐ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ,’ φησὶν, ‘ἔδωκα, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀνθρωπίνῳ.’ ἐρωτηθεὶς πῶς ἂν τοῖς φίλοις προσφεροίμεθα, ἔφη, ‘ὡς ἂν εὐξαίμεθα αὐτοὺς ἡμῖν προσφέρεσθαι.’ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἔφη ἀρετὴν ψυχῆς διανεμητικὴν τοῦ κατ’ ἀξίαν. κάλλιστον ἐφόδιον τῷ γήρῳ τὴν παιδείαν ἔλεγε. φησὶ δὲ Φαβωρίνος ὡς ἐκάστοτε λέγοι, ‘ᾧ φίλοι, οὐδεὶς φίλος’

There follows a list of 153 works, amounting to 445,270 lines. Even so there are still others works of Aristotle mentioned by DL but not included in that list.

Next week: Antisthenes