

Diogenes of Oenoanda: The Fragments by C. W. Chilton (1967)

Post by “Eikadistes” of August 10, 2023 at 1:27 PM

Key to the Chilton translation

FRAGMENT NUMBER in which I have placed ²line numbers to better ³organize the ... heavily fragmented ... document ...

Foreward

1(Seeing those who follow the empty opinions of the soul and do not listen to the body) bringing against the soul its ... and just accusations, that it is harassed and maltreated by it as it ought not to be, and dragged by it into things that are not necessary; for the body's wants, I maintain, are slight and easy to procure, and the soul too can live happily by sharing in their enjoyment, ²whereas the ambitions of the soul are great and hard to satisfy, and, as well as being no help to nature, do in fact bring dangers with them—seeing these men, therefore, (to make my point again) living in this condition I grieved over their manner of duty of a good man so far as it is in my power (to assist) those ³among them who are endowed with sense ... (This then is the first reason for my writing. I assert that the groundless fear of true contentment and joy is not theatres and ... and baths ... and unguents; all these things we have left to the masses ... and unguents; all these things we have left to the masses ...

2... and not least that I may refute those who attempt to abuse philosophy saying that it cannot be of any use.) But acting thus instead of meddling in politics I say these things through my inscription as though I were present, trying to show that the natural good—I mean peace of mind—is the same for one and ²all. And so having revealed the second reason for my work it is (now) time to mention how serious my purpose is and to describe its nature. For standing now at the sunset of my life through old age and all but on the point of departing this life with a cheerful ³song for the fullness of ... I wanted at this moment to help men of sense without being cut off beforehand. Now if only one man or two or three or four or five or six or as many more than that ⁴as you wish—but not too many—were in an evil plight I would do all in my power, even calling on them one by one, to give them the best advice. But since, as I have asserted, the great majority are all in common, as in a time of plague, sick with false opinions about things—and their numbers are growing even bigger (for through copying each other one catches the sickness from another ⁵like sheep); and since it is right that I should help also those who will come after me (for they too are mine even if they are not yet born) as well as being a kindly act to give assistance to the strangers living amongst us; since then the assistance from my work concerns a greater number I wished by making use of this ⁶colonnade to set forth in

public the remedies which bring salvation, remedies of which I would say in a word that all kinds have been revealed. The fears that gripped us without reason I have abolished, as to pains some I have utterly eradicated, those that are natural I have reduced to quite small measure, making their severity infinitesimal ...

3Some philosophers, and especially those of the Socratic school, say that the study of nature and worrying about things up above is superfluous, and they do not condescend to spend time on such things.

(Others do not dare to say outright that we should not study

4nature), being ashamed to make this statement, but they employ another method of getting rid of it. For then they allege that things are incomprehensible, what else are they saying but that we should not study nature? For who would choose to search ²for something he will never find? Aristotle, therefore, and those who follow the same line as Aristotle say that nothing can be scientifically known; things are always in flux and because of the swiftness of the flow they escape our apprehension. We for our part accept the flux itself but do not agree that it is so swift that at no time can the nature of each thing be grasped by ³perception. For indeed the very people who hold this opinion would themselves be unable to say the kind of thing they do say, that at one time this is which and that is black, at another neither is this white nor that black, if they had not known beforehand the nature of white and black. And those others who practice "suspension of judgement", whose "things clear" ...

5And we will explain the nature of those entities which are called the elements of things, existing as they do from the beginning and being indestructible and yet productive of things; but first we will dispose of the opinions of others. Now Heraclitus of Ephesus said that fire was elementary, Thales of Miletus water, ²Diogenes of Apollonia and Anaximenes air, Empedocles of Acragas both fire and air and water and earth, Anaxagoras of Clazomenae the homoeomeries of each thing, and those from the Stoa matter and God. Democritus of Abdera did well to speak of "indivisible natures", but since he went wrong about ³them in certain respects he will be considered among our opinions. Now however, we will criticize the men just mentioned, not arguing against them in a contentious spirit but wishing the truth to be preserved, and we will start with Heraclitus since he has been the first to be ranged against us. You are wrong, Heraclitus, to say that fire is elementary. It is not indestructible since we see it perishing, nor can it generate things ...

6² ... (nor suppose that) it cannot (go further than) the end because it knows it (to be the end). But Democritus also made a mistake unworthy of himself when he said that only the atoms really exist in objects, all the rest merely existing by convention. For according to your argument, Democritus, far from discovering the truth we shall not even be able to live, being unable to ³guard ourselves either against fire or slaughter or ...

7... Images (? in sleep) are not then empty figments of the imagination, as the Stoics claim. For indeed if they call them empty for the reason that although they do have a bodily nature yet it

is extremely thin and does not impinge on the senses, then the ²expression they employ is wrong since these too, thin as they are, should have been called “makers of visible shapes”. But if they are so thin that they do not have a bodily nature at all—which is what they really want to say rather than the former—how can the empty be depicted if it does not even exist? Images do indeed ³have a thin constitution and one that has escaped our sight ...

8(The stars have their orbits but not the same orbit.) All move on their own courses but some meet one another and others do not. And some pursue a perpendicular course up to a certain point, others an oblique one, like the sun and the moon; others rotate where they are, like the Bear. Again some move in high orbit and some in a low one. Now most people are quite ignorant of ²this; at least they assume the sun to be as low as it appears to be, whereas it is not as low as that, for if it were the earth and all things upon it must have caught fire. It is its appearance (?), therefore, which we see low in the sky and not the sun itself; but this is by the way.

Let us now speak about rising sand settings and matters ³connected with them, first making this point, that it is rash for the inquirer into obscure subjects, if he sees a number of possible explanations, to pronounce categorically about only one. Such is the method of a soothsayer rather than a wise man; to say that all explanations are possible but this one is more convincing than that is correct. It is therefore possible that the sun is a kind of ⁴coal-liek circle, very thin, which is lifted up by the winds and sustains the role of a source (of heat), some fire going out from it and other fire flowing into it from the entire universe in small coagulations because of its multifarious composition. And so by itself it is sufficient for the universe ...

9... how the human frame emerged throughout the earth, wet or muddy as it was, is shown by our present argument. So, being sprung from the earth in embryonic shape, some kind of strength inherent in nature ...

10(As time went on?) fleeing from the wintry weather they came to device houses and, as a result of the wrappings which they made for their bodies, covering them with leaves or plants of skins—for they were already killing animals—they thought of clothes, not flexible (textile?) as yet but thick (felt?) perhaps, or of some ²kind or other. And then the passage of time put into their minds, or the minds of those who came after them, the loom also. So neither for these skills nor for any other do we need to bring in Athena or some other god; they all arose from their needs and chance happenings combined with time.

And for the sounds of speech also—I mean the nouns and ³verbs of which men born from earth first made utterance—do not let us introduce Hermes as an instructor as some do—that is obviously idle talk—nor let us believe those philosophers who say that names were given to things by prescription and teaching ⁴so that men might have symbols of them for the sake of easy communication one with another. The idea is absurd, in fact it is more absurd than any absurdity as well as being quite impossible that anyone should bring together so many multitudes being only one himself—for as yet there were no ... nor even ⁵letters where there

were no sounds; for as to these ... to bring them together (by?) word of command—and after bringing them together that he should instruct them like a schoolmaster, taking hold of a (stick) and touching each thing should say as he did so, “This is to be called *stone*, and this *wood*, and this *man*, or *dog* ...”

11(... perished, and the noblest men like Anaxagoras they persecute. Therefore it will be made clear that it is not we who do away with the gods but other people. And it was Diagoras the Melian, in the exposition of this doctrine in Eudemus, who asserted that there are no gods, bitterly attacking those who think ²otherwise.) And Protagoras of Abdera in effect held the same opinion as Diagoras but used different words so as to avoid its excessive boldness. He said that he did not know whether gods exist, which is the same as saying that he knew they did not. For if he did not oppose to his first statement “I certainly do not know ³that they do not exist”, (it is clear that he is more or less trying to make an excuse so as not to seem to be doing away with the gods entirely; but since he said that it was uncertain whether gods exist or not, in fact he is obviously doing the same as if, having said the he did not know whether they exist, he had stopped there. The view he propounded, then, is, as I say, the same, or has the same force, as the formers.)

14(Gladly have I followed your) sayings on death and you have persuaded me to laugh it to scorn. I am not in the least afraid because of the Tityuses and Tantaluses that some people depict in the underworld, not does the decay of the body make me shudder, bearing in mind the destruction of the body causes no displeasure when the soul has perished; nor does anything else upset me ...

Diogenes of Oinoanda: On the Innumerability of the Worlds

15Diogenes to Antipater, greetings. Many are the indications of your keenness which you have given me, Antipater, both in your letters sent to me recently and when I saw you before, heartily embracing philosophy, in which you, if anyone, enjoy a life of supreme happiness amidst the best of studies. It is for this very ²reason that I am most anxious to meet again you in particular and our other friends in Athens, Chalcis, and Thebes, and I imagine that you all feel the same. This present letter, however, I am writing to you now from Rhodes, having left my own country not long ago at the beginning of winter ...

16(But since the future is uncertain) because of the fickleness and uncertainty in human affairs and also because of my age, I have sent you the treatise on the innumerability of the worlds as you asked me to do. And in this matter you have been fortunate, for before the arrival of your letter Theodoridas of Lindos, a companion of ours not unknown to you, who is just beginning the ²study of philosophy, was engaged on the same topic, and this subject has been made clearer as a result of both of us working on it together. For our mutual agreements and contradictions, and our questionings also, made the inquiry after the object of our search more precise. I have therefore sent to you, Antipater, an account of that discourse so that it may be the same as if you were here yourself, agreeing—as I did—with some of Theodoridas' views,

criticizing others, and asking questions as well. This was the kind of way in which we began: “Diogenes,” Theo-doridas said, “that the doctrines laid down by Epicurus about the innumerability of the worlds is true ...”

18I laugh with derision especially when I learn from you the arguments you have reported to us from those who allege ... arguments which do away with the entire universe ...

19... Therefore, the indivisible natures being assumed by us to be ²limited in number, and for the reasons we have given being unable to coagulate—for since they were formed no other natures have as yet arisen to surround their multitude, support them from below, and bring them together from the sides—how are they to generate things, separate as they are from one another? So not even this world would exist. For if they were limited they could not have come together.

20... let us make a defence of our theory ... saying: “Gentlemen, ... you cannot explain either the earth or the infinite. Do you limit the earth by the circle of the heaven above ... and ²beginning from there extend it to infinity into the zone below, dis-regarding equally all laymen and philosophers who think that the earth is circled by the stars above and below—driving the sun outside the universe to the sides and bringing it back again from the sides—or do you not say this, but that a single earth...?”

The Ethical Treatise

23Diogenes of Oinoanda, on feelings and actions ..., an epitome.

24Many people pursue philosophy for the sake of (wealth of reputation) as though they will obtain these things from private persons or kings who have come to believe that philosophy is some great and costly possession. But we have not hastened to undertake the same study so that any of the above rewards should ²come to us also, but so that we may be happy gaining possession of the end and purpose of life sought by nature. And what this end is, and that neither wealth can provide it, nor political reputation, nor kingship, nor a life of luxury, nor a rich table, nor the pleasures of exquisite love affairs, nor anything else, but ³only philosophy, (this we will now show, putting before you the whole matter. For this treatise we have prepared not for our own sakes but for yours, fellow citizens, to benefit you and serve as a fitting introduction to the argument here.)

Key Doctrine 1

The blessed and indestructible being is neither troubled itself nor does it cause trouble to another, and so it is not subject to feelings of anger or partiality; all that belongs to weakness.

25... (if) time (allows). And this we have devised with the object that even while sitting at home it might be possible for us to set forward the benefits of philosophy not to (all men here ...) ² Furthermore we did this not least for the sake of those who are called strangers though they are not really so. With regard to the several divisions of the earth one has one country and one

another, but if we look at the entire compass of this world there is one country for all, the whole earth, and one home, the world.

Now I am not rushing any of you into accepting without thought and consideration that what is said is true—I have made no dogmatic statements—but look at everything from all angles and consider it in company with me. One thing only I ask, as I did just now, that you do not look at what is written after the fashion of passers-by, or in a spirit of carelessness and boredom, paying only fickle attention to one section after another and passing on ...

Key Doctrine 2

Death is nothing to us, for that which has been dissolved into its elements has no sensation and that which has no sensation is nothing to us.

26... (this opinion [criticism?] be-ing) as ill-natured as the previous one. I will speak of their stupidity in a moment, but first about virtues and pleasure. If, gentlemen, the matter in dispute between these men and ourselves were an inquiry into what is productive of happiness, and they had wanted to say that it is the virtues, which is indeed the truth, there would be no need to ²do anything but agree with them and leave it at that. But since, as I say, the question is not what is productive of happiness but what is happiness itself, and what it is which our nature it its innermost being desires, then I say both now and always, crying aloud to Greek and foreigner, that it is pleasure which is the ³highest point of the best way of life, while the virtues which are now unseasonably fussed over by these people (for they transfer them from the category of the productive into that of the end) are in no way the end but are productive of the end.

Let us now show that this is true, beginning like this; is ⁴someone were to ask another—it is a silly question really—who it is that these virtues help, it is clear that he will say, “Mankind”. The virtues are not concerned with how these birds we see flying past will fly well, or with any other animal; they do not so abandon the nature to which they belong and by which they have been brought into being; rather it is for the sake of this nature that the virtues do everything and exist. So each one ...

Key Doctrine 6

To feel secure against the world the possession of power and kingship is a natural good, so long as that end can be achieved by them.

Key Doctrine 8

No pleasure it itself is a bad thing, but the means of producing some pleasure bring annoyances many times greater than the pleasures.

27... I wish, therefore, after this to examine the mistake about feeling which prevails among you, and in particular to say something about one doctrines of yours which is untrue. It is this.

Not all causes in things are antecedent to their effects, even if the ²majority are; some are antecedent, some simultaneous, and some occur afterwards. The cause is antecedent when, for instance, cautery or surgery brings a cure. Here the pain must be applied first for health and strength to follow afterwards. A simultaneous cause is exemplified by dry and liquid refreshment, and, as well ³as these, by the pleasures of love. We do not eat bread and *then* feel pleasure, we do not drink wine and *then* feel pleasure, nor do we emit semen and *then* feel pleasure; (we enjoy the sensation at once) ...

4For although people feel pleasure *now* because there will be a pleasant memory of them after they are gone, neverthe-less the cause of the pleasure occurs later. You, therefore, being unable to make these distinctions, and not know-ing that the virtues belong to the class of causes which are simultaneous with their effects (for they go along together ...)

Key Doctrine 10

If those things which produce the pleasures of profligates put an end to mental fears about celestial phenomena and about death and pain, and, besides, taught the limits of desire and pain, we should never be able to criticize such men, as they would be sated with pleasures from every source, and know neither mental nor physical pain, which is the evil.

28... (a sure hope) based on the selection of (such things) and the treatment of erring feelings. So where, I insist, the danger is great, so also is the fruit. And here we must avoid those sophistic arguments as treacherous and captious, and devised from a ³similarity of words for the confusion of unfor-tunate mankind ...

4... (since advantage does not always come at once but just as one thing bears its fruit at once and another brings benefits which appear after some years, so it is with pain also. For after the sowing of the seed it does not all produce the same benefit ⁵for the sower; some shows germination and growth at once) ...

(We therefore, making this selection of the pleasant and the troublesome and considering the "ends", place pleasure once more on its pedestal.)

6... folly. But we are now inquiring how life may be made pleasant for us both in mental states and actions. Let us speak first about mental states, noting indeed that when the emotions that disturb the soul are removed things that give it pleasure come in to take their place. Now what are these disturbing ⁷emotions? They are fears, of the gods, of death, and of pain; and, in addition, desire which far exceeds its natural bounds. These are indeed the root of all evil, and if we cut them off no evil will grow up in their stead to trouble us. Now the fear which we feel about the gods ...

Key Doctrine 3

The limit to the intensity of pleasure is the removal of all pain. Whoever enjoys a feeling of pleasure will, as long as it continues, never be annoyed by pain of body or of mind or of both

together.

29²... In fact this fear is sometimes explained and sometimes not. It is explained when we flee from something obvious like fire, fearing that we shall meet death through it; it is not explained when the mind being in the presence of another kind of nature which is masked and (being unable to throw light upon it, we shudder) ...

Key Doctrine 13

It does not help to secure protection against men if things on high and things beneath the earth and in fact everything in the boundless universe causes us suspicion and uncertainty.

30So why is the coming to pass of certain predictions strong proof that prophecy is real than the not coming to pass of others is proof that it is not? I think myself ...

32... (For if anyone believes that what has already been said is not so, and that it is not possible to escape from necessity, he will never be rid of error. But if he does believe it he will dismiss those ideas also without distinction as doubtful and uncertain. For it is plain that he will find no other reason to believe what is ²said.) So if divination is done away with, how is there any other proof of destiny? If someone makes use of the theory of Democritus, saying that there is no free movement for the atoms because indestructible, but then go on to say that the souls of the foolish perish immediately after the dissolution of the body whereas those of the virtuous survive, and then they also perish in time. ³see how manifestly unconvincing their doctrine is; they make their assertion as though the wise and the unwise are not subject to the same mortality even if they do differ in intelligence. But I am more surprised at their restraint, why, if once the soul is going to be able to exist apart from the body—even, we might say, for the least moment of time—(they do not allow it to last for ever).

Key Doctrine 29

Of desires some are natural and necessary, some are natural but not necessary, and some are neither natural nor necessary but arise from empty opinion.

37The soul provides nature with the reason for the (presence or) absence of life. For even though it does not possess the same number of atoms as the body, being placed in it with its rational and irrational elements, never-theless it encompasses the whole body and, being bound to it, binds it in its turn just as the shortest dash of acid juice curdles a vast quantity of milk. The following, ²along with many others, is a sign of the superiority of this cause. Often when the body has been brought to surrender by a long illness, and reduced to such thinness and wasting that the dry skin is almost adhering to the bones whilst the nature of the inward parts seems empty and bloodless, nevertheless the soul stands ³its ground and does not permit the creature to die. And this is not the only indication of supremacy; the severing of hands, and often the removal of whole arms or feet by fire and steel cannot undo the bonds of life. So great is the sway over life held by that part of us which is soul.

But often when the body is intact and has suffered no loss of parts (the power of sense leaves it, for if the atoms of the soul do not stand their ground the wholeness of the body does not help, whereas so long as we see them holding firm like a framework the man lives. Therefore, if the ultimate cause of life is the soul, according as to whether it is joined to the body or separated from it...)

Key Doctrine 5

It is not possible to live pleasantly without living sensibly and honourably and justly, nor is it possible to live sensibly and honourably and justly without living pleasantly. Where this is lacking a man cannot live a pleasant life.

38... feelings are much bigger than the cause which produced them. A tiny spark kindles a fire so vast that it burns down ports and cities. But the supremacy of those feelings which afflict the soul is hard for the layman to understand. For since it is not ²possible to experience both kinds of extreme at one time—I mean of the different feelings which affect the soul and the body—and so make a comparison, since this happens only on rare occasions and when it does happen life is destroyed, a means of testing these two for supremacy is not found. When a man is afflicted with bodily pains he says that they are worse than those of the soul ³(and when he experiences those of the soul he says that they are worse). For what is present is always more convincing than what is absent, and clearly each man is inclined either by necessity or through pleasure to award the palm of supremacy to the feeling which has him in its grip. A wise man, however, deduces this difficulty of understanding felt by the majority from many other sources and ...

Key Doctrine 4

Pain does not last continuously in the flesh; when it is intense it is present for a very short time, if it merely exceeds the bodily sensation of pleasure the attack does not last many days. In long illnesses the feelings of pleasure in the flesh outweigh the pain.

Various Maxims

40Nothing is so productive of contentment as not being too busy, not undertaking disagreeable tasks, and not pushing ourselves beyond our powers; for all these things cause worry and trouble to our nature.

41The most important source of happiness is our disposition, of which we are master. Military service is burdensome and under the command of others, the life of the speaker is packed with unhealthy excitement and worry as to whether he can carry conviction. Why then do we pursue an object like this, in which others hold the power?

42Extremes of pain cannot last. They either quickly do away with life and so are done away with themselves, or they develop a lessening of their intensity.

43... which of the desires are natural and which are empty.

It is not nature, which is the same for all, which makes the noble and the mean; it is actions and dispositions.

44(Unnatural wealth is no more benefit to men than is water to a full vessel. We must realize that both run over.

We can look without concern upon the possessions of others and enjoy a purer pleasure than they do; for we are not troubled by these appetites.)

45For one groaning in pain to say “alas” is forced on us by nature, but to lament because (we do not enjoy the lot of the healthy is contrary to nature).

Various Writings

49... goodwill towards the strangers who are staying in this district. And knowing well that from the knowledge of the matters which I have set out below, matters concerning both nature and the feelings ...

Diogenes' Will

50These are the instructions which I, Diogenes, give to my family, relations, and friends. Being so ill that the crisis is now upon me as to whether I am to go on living or live no more—for a disease of the stomach is exhausting me—if I survive I shall gladly accept the life still offered me, but if I do not ...

A Letter to Friends

51... (have prepared a wall in the basilica on which you will have the treatise written and corrected. And I thank the woman who formerly entertained me and those with me, and to whom ²my friends took me in haste.) I am convinced that I owe my recovery particularly to your recommending me to her, dearest Menneas, because of the kindly disposition and care shown towards me by ³you and by the excellent Carus and my Dionysius at the time when I stayed with her in Rhodes. Farewell again.

A Letter to Mother

52... (to cause the greatest concern about them. For the appearance of those who are absent, independent of sight, instils very great fear, whereas if they are present with us it causes not the least dread. But if you carefully examine their nature the appearances) ²of the absent are exactly the same as those of the present. For the appearance of those who are absent, independent of sight, instils very great fear, whereas if they are present with us it causes not the least dread. But if you carefully examine their nature the appearances) ³of the absent are exactly the same as those of the present. For being not tangible but intelligible they have in themselves the same capacity towards those present as when they arose, their ⁴subjects being

present also. Therefore, Mother, take heart; you must not regard visions of me as evil. Rather consider that I am daily acquiring useful help towards advancing further towards ⁴happiness. Not slight or of no avail are the advantages that accrue to me, such that they make my condition equal to the divine and show that not even mortality can make me inferior to the indestructible and blessed nature. For as long as I live I rejoice even as do the gods ...

53... the same, if he suffers diminution; but if he has no sensation, how is he diminished? Surrounded by such good things, then, think of me, mother, as rejoicing always and have confidence in how I am faring. But in heaven's name be sparing with the ²remittances you are constantly sending me. I do not wish you to be in need so that I may have abundance, I would rather suffer need so that you should not; and yet I am living in plenty ³in every respect thanks to friends and father continually sending me money; indeed only recently Cleon sent me nine minae. So neither one nor other of you should worry about me but enjoy each other's company ...

The manual of Diogenes of Oinoanda

55Often, by Heracles, I have been angry, young men, with those who, not having yet reached old age ...

2... who have proceeded further with their education so as not only to praise ...

56(... since many) live to the last day of their lives with their faculties unimpaired. And I, so that I may abundantly retort to those who (blame ...)

57... is put forward by me. And the first thing of all is this. If anyone were to call the weakening of the eyes suffered by old men blindness ...

58... elephant ... slowness of body ... ²And then the argument about feelings of sadness, since some people bring these forward also, can be put like this. In the first place it cannot be used against the old. As a general rule, where there is no longing for a thing there is no feeling of sadness about it either ...

59 (Troubles caused by the cough)

60... something like this: "He slept gently for a time, for that is the way of old men." But I say that when the body has aged, the mind ...

61²(The same Home shows how the man no longer able to be of use with his body gives great help in emergencies with counsel, and the best counsel too, saying, "And first he called a council ³of the old men, great of heart", and again, "They had ceased from war through old age but were good speakers". And to Homer's testimony is added the tragic poet.)

62... (and besides [we hear that] many of those already aged have by their words taken part in counsel with the greatest vigour; far from being unable to take thought for the matters I have

mentioned, with their clear minds ...)

63Let us not forget that it is not from old age that derangement comes but from some other natural cause ...

64²(... so that bodily pains often allow periods of relief and are not by nature ...)

66... and besides this, young men, great indeed is the advantage ... poverty ...

Post by “Godfrey” of August 10, 2023 at 4:49 PM

@Nate this is great! Are you planning to upload it as a pdf? Personally, I've never wrapped my head around D of O and this would be really helpful in that regard.

Post by “Don” of August 10, 2023 at 6:00 PM

For anyone who wants the Greek:

[DCLP/Trismegistos 865216 = LDAB 865216](#)

Post by “Cassius” of August 10, 2023 at 6:16 PM

Thank you Don! That's a new resource to me.