

How to Make Up One's Philosophy Master

The Lives of Plotinus and Pythagoras by Porphyry and Iamblichus

A. The body and its passions

T1

Πλωτῖνος ὁ καθ' ἡμᾶς γεγονώς φιλόσοφος ἐώκει μὲν αἰσχυνομένῳ ὅτι ἐν σώματι εἶη. Ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς τοιαύτης διαθέσεως οὔτε περὶ τοῦ γένους αὐτοῦ διηγείσθαι ἠνείχετο οὔτε περὶ τῶν γονέων οὔτε περὶ τῆς πατρίδος. (*Life of Plotinus*, 1, 1-4)

Plotinus, the philosopher active during our own lifetime, gave the impression of being embarrassed* about having a body; he certainly could not stand talking about his race, his parents, or his original homeland. (transl. Gerson *et al.* 2018)

[* or “ashamed”: αἰσχυνομένῳ]

T2

Κωλικῆ δὲ νόσῳ πολλάκις καταπονούμενος οὔτε κλιστῆρος ἠνέσχετο, οὐκ εἶναι πρὸς τοῦ πρεσβύτου λέγων ὑπομένειν τὰς τοιαύτας θεραπείας, οὔτε τὰς θηριακὰς ἀντιδότους λαβεῖν ὑπέμεινε, μηδὲ τῶν ἡμέρων ζώων τὰς ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τροφὰς προσίεσθαι λέγων. Λουτροῦ δὲ ἀπεχόμενος καὶ τρίψεσι καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν χρώμενος ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκίας, ἐπειδὴ τοῦ λοιμοῦ ἐπιβρίσαντος συνέβη τοὺς τρίβοντας αὐτὸν ἀποθανεῖν, ἀμελήσας τῆς τοιαύτης θεραπείας κατ' ὀλίγον τὴν τοῦ κυνάγχου ἀγριότητα κατασκευαζομένην ἔσχε. (*Life of Plotinus*, 2, 1-10)

He often suffered from bowel trouble, but would not tolerate having an enema; he said it was not appropriate for an old man to undergo that sort of therapy. He would not agree to take medicines derived from wild animals either; he did not, he said, want to derive nourishment from the bodies even of domesticated animals. He stayed away from the baths, but used to be rubbed down daily at home until, during a severe outbreak of plague, the people who rubbed him down were among those who died. He gave up the treatment then, but soon afterwards became afflicted with terrible throat infections. (transl. Gerson *et al.* 2018)

T3

Ἦ πῶς οὐκ ὀρθὸν καὶ τὸν νομοθέτην συγχωρεῖν ταῦτα μὲν πάσχειν ἐκείνους δίκην ἀργίας καὶ τρυφῆς διδόντας, οἳ ἀποδεδειγμένων γυμνασίων αὐτοῖς [οἴδ'] ὑπ' ἀργίας καὶ τοῦ ζῆν μαλακῶς καὶ ἀνειμένως περιεῖδον ἑαυτοὺς ἄρνας καταπιανθέντας λύκων ἀρπαγὰς εἶναι; [...] οὐδὲ γὰρ κομίζεσθαι καρποὺς εὐχομένους ἀλλὰ γῆς ἐπιμελουμένους, οὐδέ γε ὑγιαίνειν μὴ ὑγείας ἐπιμελουμένους· οὐδ' ἀγανακτεῖν δέ, εἰ τοῖς φαύλοις πλείους γίνοντο καρποὶ ἢ ὅλως αὐτοῖς γεωργοῦσιν εἶη ἄμεινον. (*Enneads*, III, 2 [47], 8, 21-26 & 38-42)

How could not it be right for a lawgiver to agree that they suffer this as paying the penalty for their laziness and indulgence, youths who, after being shown what exercises they should do, looked idly by as they became fattened lambs, the prey of wolves, as a result of their laziness and their soft and listless living? [...] For the law says that those who are brave, not those who pray, are to come out safe from wars. For it is not those who pray but those who take care of the land who harvest the fruits, nor do those remain healthy who do not take care of their health. And one should not also be

annoyed if the wicked get larger harvests or if things should go better in general for those who work their land more. (transl. Gerson *et al.* 2018, slightly modified)

T4

πυκνὸν γὰρ ἦν αὐτῷ πρὸς ἅπαντας πανταχῆ πολλοὺς καὶ ὀλίγους τὸ τοιοῦτον ἀπόφθεγμα, χρησμῶ θεοῦ συμβουλευτικῶ ὅμοιον, ἐπιτομή τις ὡσπερὶ καὶ ἀνακεφαλαίωσίς τις τῶν αὐτῶ δοκούντων· ‘φυγαδευτέον πάση μηχανῇ καὶ περικοπτέον πυρὶ καὶ σιδήρῳ καὶ μηχαναῖς παντοίαις ἀπὸ μὲν σώματος νόσον, ἀπὸ δὲ ψυχῆς ἀμαθίαν, κοιλίας δὲ πολυτέλειαν, πόλεως δὲ στάσιν, οἴκου δὲ διχοφροσύνην, ὁμοῦ δὲ πάντων ἀμετρίαν’ (*Life of Pythagoras*, 34)

There was a pregnant saying, like the advice of an oracle, which summed up and epitomised his beliefs: he addressed it to everyone everywhere, both the few and the many. “These things are to be avoided by every means, eradicated by fire or iron or any other means: *disease from the body*, ignorance from the soul, luxury from the belly, faction from the city, division from the household, excess from everything.” (transl. Clark 1989 ; my italics)

T5

πρῶτον μὲν οἷον θεμέλιος καὶ ὑποβάθρα τῆς καθάρσεως τὸ γνῶναι ἑαυτὸν ψυχὴν ὄντα ἐν ἀλλοτρίῳ πράγματι καὶ ἑτεροουσίῳ συνδεδεμένον. δεύτερον δὲ τὸ ἀπὸ τούτου ὀρμώμενον τοῦ πείσματος συνάγειν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος καὶ τοῖς μὲν τόποις, πάντως γε μὴν ἀπαθῶς πρὸς αὐτὸ διατιθέμενον. (*Sententiae*, 32, 100-105)

For a start, it is as it were the foundation und underpinning of purification to recognise that one is a soul bound down in an alien entity of a quite distinct nature. In the second place, taking one's start from this conviction, one should gather oneself together from the body even, as it were, in a local sense, but at any rate adopting an attitude of complete disaffection with respect to the body. (transl. Dillon 2005)

T6

Καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς τι θεσμὸν ἐπιτελεῖται ἐν τῷ τοιῷδε, ἵνα μεταστραφῶσιν οἱ θεοὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰς ὕστερον γιγνομένην ἱεουργίαν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης καθόδου ἐπὶ τούτῳ κατέπεμψεν ὁ θεὸς τὰς ψυχάς, ἵνα πάλιν εἰς αὐτὸν ἐπανέλθωσιν. Οὔτε οὖν μεταβολὴ τις γίγνεται διὰ τῆς τοιαύτης ἀναγωγῆς οὔτε μάχονται αἱ κάθοδοι τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ αἱ ἀνοδοὶ. Ὡσπερ γὰρ καὶ ἐν τῷ παντὶ τῆ νοεῖα οὐσία ἡ γένεσις καὶ τὸ πᾶν τότε συνήρηται, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν ψυχῶν διακοσμήσει τῆ περὶ γένεσιν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελεία συμφωνεῖ καὶ ἡ ἀπὸ γενέσεως λύσις. (*On the Mysteries*, VIII, 8)

And nothing in such a process [i.e. the ascent of the soul] is accomplished contrary to the ordinance laid down from the beginning, so that the gods should change their plans in virtue of some subsequently performed theurgic ceremony, but rather it is the case that from their first descent the god sent down the souls for this purpose, that they should return again to him. There is therefore no element of change of plan involved in such a process of ascent, nor is there any conflict between the descents of souls and their ascents. For even as, at the universal level, the realm of generation and this universe are dependant upon intellectual reality, so also in the dispensation of souls, liberation from the processes of generation is in harmony with the care bestowed upon their introduction into generation. (transl. Clarke *et al.* 2004)

B. ProgressionT7

[N]on solum ab animis humanis remouisse corpora bestiarum, uerum etiam sapientium animas ita uoluisse de corporeis nexibus liberari, ut corpus omne fugientes beatae apud patrem sine fine teneantur. (City of God, XIII, 19, 39-41 = fr. 300bF Smith)

[Porphyry] not only banned the bodies of beasts from union with human souls but also held that the souls of wise men were so completely released from the bonds of the body that they abandoned every sort of body and were preserved for ever happy in the Father's presence. (transl. Levine 1966)

T8

Οἶμαι τοίνυν καὶ τὰ τέλη διάφορα ὄντα καὶ τοὺς τρόπους τῆς καθόδου τῶν ψυχῶν ποιεῖν διαφέροντας. Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ καὶ καθάρσει καὶ τελειότητι τῶν τῆδε κατιούσα ἄχραντον ποιεῖται καὶ τὴν κάθοδον· ἡ δὲ διὰ γυμνασίαν καὶ ἐπανόρθωσιν τῶν οἰκείων ἡθῶν ἐπιστρεφομένη περὶ τὰ σώματα οὐκ ἀπαθῆς ἐστὶ παντελῶς, οὐδὲ ἀφεῖται ἀπόλυτος καθ' ἑαυτήν· ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ δίκῃ καὶ κρίσει δεῦρο κατερχομένη συρομένη πως ἔοικε καὶ συνελαυνομένη. (Iamblichus' *De Anima*, fr. 29 Dillon)

Furthermore, I actually think that the purposes for which souls descend are different and that they thereby also cause differences in the manner of the descent. For the soul that descends for the salvation, purification, and perfection of this realm is immaculate in its descent. The soul, on the other hand, that directs itself about bodies for the exercise and correction of its own character is not entirely free of passions and was not sent away free in itself. The soul that comes down here for punishment and judgment seems somehow to be dragged and forced. (transl. Dillon 2002)

T9

Ἄ μέντοι ἡμῖν αὐτὸς ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ταῖς ὁμιλίαις πολλάκις διηγεῖτο, ἦν τοιαῦτα. Προσφοιτᾶν μὲν γὰρ τῇ τροφῷ καίπερ εἰς γραμματοδιδασκάλου ἀπίοντα ἄχρις ὀγδοῦ ἔτους ἀπὸ γενέσεως ὄντα καὶ τοὺς μαζοὺς γυμνοῦντα θηλάζειν προθυμεῖσθαι· ἀκούσαντα δὲ ποτε ὅτι ἀτηρόν ἐστὶ παιδίον, ἀποσχέσθαι αἰδεσθέντα. Εἰκοστὸν δὲ καὶ ὀγδοὸν ἔτος αὐτὸν ἄγοντα ὀρμηῆσαι ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν καὶ τοῖς τότε κατὰ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν εὐδοκιμοῦσι συσταθέντα κατιέναι ἐκ τῆς ἀκροάσεως αὐτῶν κατηφῆ καὶ λύπης πλήρη, ὡς καὶ τινι τῶν φίλων διηγεῖσθαι ἃ πάσχοι· τὸν δὲ συνέντα αὐτοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ βούλημα ἀπενέγκαι πρὸς Ἀμμώνιον, οὗ μηδέπω πεπεύρατο. (*Life of Plotinus*, 3, 1-12)

He, however, often quite spontaneously offered information about himself when he was in company, such as the fact that he used to go to his nurse, bare her breasts, and ask to suckle even when he was 7 years old and going to school. He was, however, shamed into stopping when she once called him an obnoxious brat. He was attracted to philosophy at the age of 27, and went to the best regarded philosophers in Alexandria, but he came away from their lectures depressed and miserable. He told one of his friends what was wrong, and the friend, who understood what his soul was yearning for, took him off to hear Ammonius, whom he had not yet tried. (transl. Gerson *et al.* 2018)

T10

ὁ δὲ ἀνετρέφετο εὐμορφότατός τε τῶν πάποτε ἱστορηθέντων καὶ θεοπρεπέστατος εὐτυχηθείς, ἀποθανόντος τε τοῦ πατρὸς σεμνότατος σωφρονέστατός τε ἠϋζάνετο, κομιδῆ τε νέος ἔτι ὑπάρχων ἐντροπῆς πάσης καὶ αἰδοῦς ἤξιοῦτο ἤδη καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτάτων, ὀφθείς τε καὶ φθεγξάμενος ἐπέστρεφε πάντας, καὶ ὧτινι οὖν προσβλέψας θαυμαστός ἐφαίνετο, ὥστε ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν εἰκότως βεβαιοῦσθαι τὸ θεοῦ παῖδα αὐτὸν εἶναι [...] ὡς δὲ δαίμων τις ἀγαθὸς ἐπιδημῶν τῆ Σάμῳ. (*Life of Pythagoras*, 9-10)

Pythagoras grew up surpassing in beauty all persons known to history, and in good fortune most worthy of a god. After his father's death he continued to grow in earnestness and self-control, and while still a very young man, full of courtesy and modesty, he was well thought of even by the eldest citizens. Everyone turned to look on seeing him or hearing his voice, and anyone he looked at was struck with admiration, so it was quite understandable that most people were convinced he was the son of a god. [...] It was as if a benevolent spirit had come to stay in Samos. (transl. Clark 1989)

C. Cult and the godsT11

οὗτοι οἱ χαίροντες ‘λοιβῆ τε κνίσῃ τε’, δι’ ὧν αὐτῶν τὸ πνευματικὸν καὶ σωματικὸν παίνεται. ζῆ γὰρ τοῦτο ἀτμοῖς καὶ ἀναθυμιάσεσι ποικίλως διὰ τῶν ποικίλων, καὶ δυναμοῦται ταῖς ἐκ τῶν αἱμάτων καὶ σαρκῶν κνίσαις. διὸ συνετὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ σώφρων εὐλαβηθήσεται τοιαύταις χρῆσθαι θυσίαις, δι’ ὧν ἐπισπάσεται πρὸς ἑαυτὸν τοὺς τοιούτους· (*On Abstinence*, II, 42-43)

It is they [i.e. the *daimones*] who rejoice in the 'drink-offerings and smoking meat' on which their pneumatic part grows fat, for it lives on vapours and exhalations, in a complex fashion and from complex sources, and it draws power from the smoke that rises from blood and flesh. So an intelligent, temperate man will be wary of making sacrifices through which he will draw such beings to himself. (transl. Clark *et al.* 2013)

T12

ὁ μὲν μὴ ἀπονείμας πᾶσι τὸ πρόσφορον καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐπιβάλλουσαν τιμὴν ἕκαστον δεξιωσάμενος, ἀτελής ἀπέρχεται καὶ ἄμοιρος τῆς μετουσίας τῶν θεῶν (*On the Mysteries*, V, 21)

[A]nyone who fails to allot to all [gods] their due and welcome each of them with suitable honour will end up unsatisfied and deprived of any share with the gods. (transl. Clarke *et al.* 2004)

T13

Φιλοθύτου δὲ γεγονότος τοῦ Ἀμελίου καὶ τὰ ἱερὰ κατὰ νομηνίαν καὶ τὰς ἐορτὰς ἐκπεριόντος καί ποτε ἀξιοῦντος τὸν Πλωτῖνον σὺν αὐτῷ παραλαβεῖν ἔφη· «ἐκείνους δεῖ πρὸς ἐμὲ ἔρχεσθαι, οὐκ ἐμὲ πρὸς ἐκείνους.» (*Life of Plotinus*, 10, 33-36)

Amelius was fond of sacrifices, and used to busy himself with rites of the new moon, and rites to allay fears. He once tried to get Plotinus to participate with him, but Plotinus said: 'They must come to me, not I to them.' (transl. Gerson *et al.* 2018)

T14

βούλομαι δὲ ἄνωθεν τὰς ἀρχὰς ὑποδείξει τῆς τῶν θεῶν θρησκείας, ἃς προεστήσατο Πυθαγόρας τε καὶ οἱ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἄνδρες. ἅπαντα ὅσα περὶ τοῦ πράττειν ἢ μὴ πράττειν διορίζουσιν ἐστόχασται τῆς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ὁμολογίας [...] ταῦτα δὲ οὐ ῥάδιον εἶδέναι, ἂν μὴ τις ἢ θεοῦ ἀκηκοῦτος ἢ θεοῦ ἀκούση ἢ διὰ τέχνης θείας πορίζηται. διὸ καὶ περὶ τὴν μαντικὴν σπουδάζουσι· μόνη γὰρ αὕτη ἐρμηνεία τῆς παρὰ τῶν θεῶν διανοίας ἐστὶ. καὶ ὁμῶς δὲ τὴν αὐτῶν πραγματείαν ἀξίαν <ἄν> τῷ δόξειεν εἶναι τῷ οἰομένῳ θεοὺς εἶναι, τοῖς δ' εὐήθειαν θάτερον τούτων καὶ ἀμφοτέρω. ἔστι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀποταγμάτων τὰ πολλὰ ἐκ τελετῶν εἰσηνεγμένα, διὰ τὸ οἴεσθαί τι εἶναι αὐτοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ μὴ νομίζειν ἀλαζονείαν, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τίνος θεοῦ ἔχειν τὴν ἀρχήν.
(*Life of Pythagoras*, 137-138)

I want now to return to the principles of worship of the gods which were established by Pythagoras and his successors. All their decisions about what to do or not to do aimed at being in accord with the divine. [...] But it is not easy to know what that is, unless you can find out by the god listening to you, or yourself listening to the god, or through some divine technique. This is why the Pythagoreans work at divination, for that is our only interpreter of the mind of the gods. One who believes in the gods will think this a proper concern of theirs; anyone who finds either conviction silly will think both are. Most of the prohibitions are derived from sacred rites, because the Pythagoreans think they mean something and are not inflated nonsense, but have their origin from a god. (transl. Clark 1989)

T15

ἀπὸ δὴ τούτων ἀπάντων δαιμονίως ἰᾶτο καὶ ἀπεκάθαιρε τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ ἀνεζωπύρει τὸ θεῖον ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ ἀπέσωζε καὶ περιῆγεν ἐπὶ τὸ νοητὸν τὸ θεῖον ὄμμα, κρεῖττον ὄν σωθῆναι κατὰ τὸν Πλάτωνα μυρίων σαρκίνων ὀμμάτων. μόνῳ γὰρ αὐτῷ διαβλέψαντι καὶ οἷς προσῆκε βοηθήμασι τονωθέντι καὶ διαρθρωθέντι ἢ περὶ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων ἀλήθεια διορᾶται. πρὸς δὴ τοῦτο ἀναφέρων ἐποιεῖτο τὴν τῆς διανοίας κάθαρσιν, καὶ ἦν αὐτῷ τῆς παιδείσεως ὁ τύπος τοιοῦτος καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα ἀποβλέπων. (*Life of Pythagoras*, 70)

Pythagoras, with supernatural power, healed all these, purified the soul and rekindled the divine spark in it, restored and redirected to the object of thought that divine eye whose security, as Plato says, is more important than that of a thousand bodily eyes. Only to the one who sees with that eye, having strengthened and articulated it with the proper aids, is the true nature of things perceptible. His purification of the mind was directed to this, and this was the character and aim of his system of education. (transl. Clark 1989)

D. Conclusion(s): the good studentT16

παρατηρήσας εὐφυῶς τινα καὶ εὐκινήτως ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ σφαιρίζοντα τῶν φιλογυμναστούντων μὲν καὶ σωμασκούντων, πενήτων δ' ἄλλως καὶ ἀπορωτέρων, λογισάμενος ὅτι εὐπειθῆ ἔξει, εἰ τὰ ἐπιτήδεια ἔκπλεα τις αὐτῷ ἀμεριμνοῦντι παρέχοι, προσκαλεσάμενος μετὰ τὸ λουτρὸν τὸν νεανίαν ἐπηγγείλατο αὐτάρκη αὐτῷ ἐφόδια εἰς τὴν τῆς σωμασκίας ὑποτροφήν καὶ ἐπιμέλειαν διηνεκῶς παρέξειν, εἰ διαδέξαιτο αὐτοῦ κατὰ βραχὺ τε καὶ ἀπόνως ἐνδελεχῶς τε, ὥστε μὴ ἀθρόως φορτισθῆναι, μαθήματά τινα, ἃ παρὰ βαρβάρων μὲν ἐξέμαθεν αὐτὸς νέος ὢν, ἀπολείπει δ' αὐτὸν ταῦτα ἤδη διὰ τὸ γῆρας καὶ τὴν τούτου ἀμνημοσύνην. ὑποσχομένου δὲ τοῦ νεανίου καὶ τῆ τῶν ἐπιτηδείων ἐλπίδι ὑπομείναντος τὴν δι' ἀριθμῶν μάθησιν καὶ γεωμετρίας ἐνάγειν αὐτῷ

ἐπειρᾶτο, ἐπ' ἄβακος τὰς ἐκάστου ἀποδείξεις ποιούμενος, καὶ διδάσκων παντὸς σχήματος, ὃ ἔστι διαγράμματος, μισθὸν καὶ ἀντίπονον παρεῖχε τῷ νεανίᾳ τριώβολον. καὶ τοῦτο μέχρι πολλοῦ χρόνου διετέλεσε ποιῶν, φιλοτιμότατα μὲν καὶ σπουδαίως τάξει τε βελτίστη ἐμβιβάζων εἰς τὴν θεωρίαν, καθ' ἐκάστου δὲ σχήματος παράληψιν τριώβολον ἐπιδιδούς. Ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ νεανίας ὁδῶν τι ἐμμελεῖ ἀγόμενος τῆς ἐκπρεπείας ἤδη ἀντελαμβάνετο καὶ τῆς ἡδονῆς καὶ ἀκολουθίας τῆς ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασι, συνιδὼν τὸ γινόμενον ὁ σοφὸς καὶ ὅτι οὐκ ἂν ἐκὼν ἔτι ἀποσταίη οὐδὲ ἀπόσχοιτο τῆς μαθήσεως, οὐδ' εἰ πάντα πάθοι, πένιαν ὑπετιμήσατο καὶ ἀπορίαν τῶν τριωβόλων. ἐκείνου δὲ εἰπόντος ἄλλὰ καὶ χωρὶς τούτων οἷός τέ εἰμι μανθάνειν καὶ διαδέχεσθαι σου τὰ μαθήματα, ἐπήνεγκεν ἄλλ' οὐδ' αὐτὸς τὰ πρὸς τροφήν ἐπιτήδεια ἔχω ἔτι οὐδ' εἰς ἑμαυτὸν δέον οὖν σχολάζειν εἰς πορισμὸν τῶν καθ' ἡμέραν ἀναγκαίων καὶ τῆς ἐφημέρου τροφῆς οὐ καλῶς ἔχει ἄβακι καὶ ἀνονήτοις ματαιοπονήμασιν ἑαυτὸν ἀντιπερισπᾶν. ὥστε τὸν νεανίαν δυσασποσπᾶστος τοῦ συνείρειν τὴν θεωρίαν ἔχοντα καὶ ταῦτ' εἶπεῖν ἔγώ σοι λοιπὸν ποριῶ καὶ ἀντιπελαργήσω τρόπον τινά· κατὰ γὰρ ἕκαστον σχῆμα τριώβολον καὶ τὸς σοι ἀντιπαρέξω'.
(*Life of Pythagoras*, 21-24)

So he kept an eye on a gifted and well-coordinated ball-player at the gymnasium, one of those who were athletic and muscular but lacked financial resources, reckoning that this man would be easy to persuade by the offer of a generous subsidy without trouble for himself. He called the young man over after his bath, and promised to keep him supplied with funds to maintain his athletic training, if he would learn – in instalments, painlessly, consistently, so as not to be overburdened – some teachings he himself had learnt from foreigners in his youth, but which were already escaping him through the forgetfulness of old age. The young man accepted, and persevered in the hope of maintenance, and Pythagoras set out to instill in him arithmetic and geometry. He demonstrated every point on a drawing-board, and paid the young man three obols per figure (geometrical figure, that is) in return for his trouble. He did this for some considerable time, introducing him to study with great enthusiasm and excellent method, still paying him three obols for each figure learnt. But when the young man, led down the right path, had some grasp of excellence and of delight and progress in learning, and Pythagoras saw what was happening, that he would not of his own choice abandon his studies – indeed that nothing could keep him from them – he pretended he was poor and could not afford the three obols. The young man said “I can learn, and receive your teachings, without that”, and Pythagoras retorted “But I cannot afford the necessities of life even for myself, and when one has to work for one's daily needs and food it is quite wrong to be distracted by timewasting things like drawing-boards”. The young man, reluctant to lose the thread of his studies, said “I will provide for you in future as you have done for me I will pay you back three obols per figure”. (transl. Clark 1989)

T17

Ἦν δὲ καὶ Ῥογατιανὸς ἐκ τῆς συγκλήτου, ὃς εἰς τοσοῦτον ἀποστροφῆς τοῦ βίου τούτου προκεχωρήκει ὡς πάσης μὲν κτήσεως ἀποστῆναι, πάντα δὲ οἰκέτην ἀποπέμψασθαι, ἀποστῆναι δὲ καὶ τοῦ ἀξιώματος· καὶ πραιτῶρ προίεναί μὲλλον παρόντων τῶν ὑπηρετῶν μήτε προελθεῖν μήτε φροντίσαι τῆς λειτουργίας, ἀλλὰ μηδὲ οἰκίαν ἑαυτοῦ ἐλέσθαι κατοικεῖν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τινὰς τῶν φίλων καὶ συνήθων φοιτῶντα ἐκεῖ τε δειπνεῖν κάκεῖ καθεύδειν, σιτεῖσθαι δὲ παρὰ μίαν. [...] Τοῦτον ἀπεδέχετο ὁ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα ἐπαινῶν διετέλει εἰς ἀγαθὸν παράδειγμα τοῖς φιλοσοφοῦσι προβαλλόμενος. (*Life of Plotinus*, 31-40 & 44-46)

Another Senator was Rogantianus who came to reject this life to such an extent that he gave up his possessions, dismissed his slaves, and resigned his position. He was due to be inducted into the office of Praetor – the Lictors were even there. But he not only refused to go on, he resigned all public office. After he relinquished the management of his own household as well, he would dine

and sleep at the houses of various friends and acquaintances, only eating every other day. [...] Plotinus took him into his inner circle and was full of praise for him – eventually adducing him as a good example for philosophers. (transl. Gerson *et al.* 2018)

Some relevant readings:

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