

THE BEGINNING OF
GREEK PHILOSOPHY

PART TWO

BY
MANLY P. HALL

COMPLIMENTARY WITH MONTHLY
LETTER



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Periander, Prince of Corinth, came to be included among the Seven Sophists because of his great power and the wide sphere of his influence. He associated himself with the wisest of the Greek thinkers and became a patron of learning, both philosophical and judicial. He was hereditary prince of the Corinthians and traced his ancestry from Hercules through an unbroken line of twenty-two generations. Plutarch declared that Periander became Tyrant or ruler by an hereditary disease derived from his father. By disease Plutarch intimated inherited power. Being a wise prince, however, Periander sought to purge himself of this disease by association with the learned and by cultivation of democratic relationships with his subjects.

Two of his most famous precepts were: first, that a good mind in a human body

was the greatest in the least; second that a wise man concealed his misfortunes that they might not gladden the hearts of his enemies.

With advancing years Periander developed an excessive melancholy, and at last ordered his own death in the eightieth year of his age. He so cunningly devised the method of his decease that the time and place of his burial remained unknown, and the Corinthians erected for him a monument over an empty tomb.

Of his wisdom the following sentences have been preserved:

1—*A democracy is better than a tyranny (absolute monarchy).*

2—*Pleasures are mortal, virtues are immortal.*

3—*In good fortune be moderate, in bad fortune be prudent.*

4—*So conduct yourself that during life you will be praised and in death beatified.*

5—*To your friends be the same in prosperity and adversity.*

6—*Use new diets but old laws.*

7—*A successful democracy must have in it something of aristocracy.*

8—*Love and not armies must guard the persons of the great.*

CLEOBULOS, tyrant of Lindus, was also lineally descended from Hercules, and is described by Suidas as, "Excelling in wisdom, outward beauty and physical strength all those of his time." He was learned in the philosophy of the Egyptians and prepared many precepts and doctrines for the consideration of rulers. He wrote considerably and composed verses to the number of three thousand. His daughter was a most powerful influence in his life, having received every benefit which education could bestow, a circumstance unusual in his day. Cleobulos died at over seventy years of age and his memory was perpetuated by the grateful citizens of his state.

His most famous precepts were:

1—*Do good to your friend that he may be more your friend, and to your enemy that he may become your friend, for we should*

beware of the calumny of friends and of the treachery of enemies.

2—*Marry only those who are of equal social position for by matching into a higher family one procures masters, not kinsmen.*

3—*Educate your daughters as you do your sons.*

4—*Devote your life to something which is excellent.*

5—*If a leader of a state is to be happy he must trust none that are about him.*

6—*Moderation is the greatest virtue.*

7—*Rich, be not exalted; poor, be not dejected.*

8—*Learn to bear unmoved the vicissitudes of fortune.*

9—*'Tis better to love to listen than it is to love to speak.*

10—*Take care of the body and of the soul.*

11—*Listen willingly but believe not all you hear.*

12—*When you go forth, consider what you*

have to do; when you return consider what you have done.

13—*It is better to know a few things than to be ignorant of all things.*

SOLON, Archon of Athens, was one of the noblest and wisest of the Greeks. He earned for himself the title of The Eloquent for in discourse, rhetoric and poetry he was without a peer. Solon was initiated into the mysteries of the Egyptians and was the great law-maker of the Athenians. Of law Solon wrote: "Laws are like cobwebs which entangle the weak but through which the greater break uninjured." Being asked what constituted a well ordered city, he answered, "That in which the citizens obey the magistrates and the magistrates obey the laws."

Solon declared that there was but one thing that man had to fear, namely that he would die before he became a philosopher. Solon shared the philosophic extension of life for he died at over a hundred years, ordering his friends to carry his bones to Salamis, the city of his birth, there burn them and cause them to be scattered over the country. Solon loved knowledge to the end

and on the day of his death lifted his weary head to catch the words of some discoursing friends. Being asked why he did this he answered, "that I may learn even while I am departing from this life."

Herewith are a few fragments from the wisdom of Solon:

1—*If all men should bring their misfortunes together in one place, each one would carry his own home again rather than take an equal share from the common stock.*

2—*The happiness of the outward life arises from honest action and temperate living.*

3—To one who complained of the weight and number of his troubles, Solon said: "*Come into this tower and view the buildings below and ponder upon the number of sorrows that heretofore, now, and henceforth shall dwell together under these roofs, and speak not of misery as though you bore them all.*"

4—*Make reason the guide of every action.*

5—*Reason concerning hidden things from those things which are apparent.*

Solon studied philosophy with Psenophis

of Heliopolis and Sonches of Sais, the most learned and venerated of the Egyptian priest-philosophers, by whom, according to Plato, he was taught the language of the Atlantians.

GREAT SAYINGS OF THE SOPHISTS

(From the Collection of Sosiades).

1—*Be in childhood modest, in youth temperate, in manhood just, in old age prudent—then die untroubled.*

2—*Follow God.*

3—*Obey the law.*

4—*Worship the gods.*

5—*Suffer for justice.*

6—*Respect hospitality.*

7—*Govern anger.*

8—*Exercise prudence.*

9—*Love Friendship.*

10—*Honor providence.*

11—*Emulate wisdom.*

12—*Praise virtue.*

13—*Do that which is just.*

14—*Practice generosity.*

- 15—*Be a lover of wisdom.*
- 16—*What you know, do.*
- 17—*Converse with the wise.*
- 18—*Reverence the good.*
- 19—*Curb thy tongue.*
- 20—*Use wealth wisely.*
- 21—*Be grateful.*
- 22—*Wait for opportunity.*
- 23—*Expect age.*
- 24—*Boast not of strength.*
- 25—*Be never weary of learning.*
- 26—*Blame not the absent.*
- 27—*Teach those who are younger.*
- 28—*Put no faith in wealth.*
- 29—*Trust not fortune.*
- 30—*Keep secrets.*
- 31—*Honor yourself.*
- 32—*Return what is not your own.*
- 33—*Abstain from bloodshed.*
- 34—*Desire nothing unreasonable.*
- 35—*Trust no man—distrust no man.*
- 36—*Blame only those who are present.*
- 37—*Search into evil, but be not corrupted.*
- 38—*Be gentle to all.*

- 39—*Honor the ancestors.*
- 40—*Deride not the dead.*
- 41—*Criticise not the unhappy.*
- 42—*Be not troubled.*
- 43—*Be as generous to yourself as to your friend.*
- 44—*Apply thyself to discipline.*
- 45—*Pursue that which is noble.*
- 46—*Descend not from generals to particulars.*
- 47—*Be economical of time.*
- 48—*Instruct your children.*
- 49—*If you have, withhold nothing.*
- 50—*Fear most deceit.*
- 51—*Speak well of every man.*
- 52—*Judge honestly.*
- 53—*Approve hope.*
- 54—*Acknowledge superiority.*
- 55—*Rejoice in greatness.*
- 56—*Avoid dissension.*
- 57—*Be fearless in undertaking.*
- 58—*Admire the oracles.*
- 59—*Love those you serve.*
- 60—*Promise nothing.*