

## PRACTICAL FRAGMENTS OF THE FIRST PHILOSOPHERS

### The Seven Wise Men of Greece (second half of 7th century B. C. to beginning of 6th)

Four of the Seven were universally agreed upon: Thales of Miletus (the first philosopher), Pittacus of Mytilene (who said *it is difficult to be good*), Bias of Priene (who said *the many are bad while few are good*) and Solon of Athens (the famous lawgiver). The earliest list of seven is that given given by Plato in the *Protagoras*, 343A-B, which adds Cleobulus of Lindus, Myson of Chen, and Chilon of Sparta. The following words at Delphi are attributed to them:

Know thyself

Nothing too much.

The exhortation *Know thyself* is addressed to men and not to angels or beasts. A beast cannot know what a beast is and the angel knows most of all himself. But man is capable of knowing himself, but at first he does not. The reason why man does not know himself at first belongs to the study of the soul. The soul is turned outwards to knowing what can be sensed, the things around our body. And only after knowing these things can it know its knowing of them and only after that its ability to know and from this the kind of thing it must be to have such ability. The understanding soul is more me than my body. And the body does not know what a body is, let alone what a soul is. But the soul can know what a body is and eventually what a soul is. Hence, the exhortation is more addressed to the soul than to the body for the former can know itself but not the latter. In a special way, the exhortation is also addressed to reason. For it is this part or ability of the soul by which it knows itself and its other parts or abilities. And reason can know what reason is. But reason also more than anything else is man. Thus to know yourself means most of all (but not only) to know the soul and especially reason. Since wisdom is the highest perfection of reason, it is not strange that the wise men should think of man as most of all reason. Other men might seem at first to identify themselves more with their emotions and with their body, but a little reflection will show that this is not so. When anger or lust or some other strong emotion is in control of a man, we all say that he has lost control of himself. But when reason is in control, we think

the man is in control. Hence, we identify ourselves more with reason than emotion. We tend to judge pre-meditated murder more severely than a murder of sudden passion. Since the man has had time to think about it, *he* seems more to have freely done it. (If he couldn't think at all about what he was doing, we wouldn't hold *him* responsible at all.) Without reason, man would be no more than a beast. When someone dies we commonly say *he* or *she* is gone because the soul has gone.

The exhortation is addressed more to the soul than the body and to reason more than the other parts of the soul. And what it is addressed more to, is also more me. But why is this exhortation addressed to man, his soul and his reason? Not only because these are able to know themselves and do not know themselves. One cannot know what is good for oneself without knowing oneself; for what is good for a thing must fit that thing. If there is truth in the exhortation which Polonius gives his son, *This above all: to thine own self be true*, one cannot achieve one's greatest good without knowing oneself. And the good of man is more the good within himself than the goods outside of him, and more the good of the soul than the good of the body, and most of all the good of reason. The distinction of human goods into the goods of the soul, the goods of the body and exterior goods is in seed here and the order of these goods as to which are better.

There is also a connection between the two exhortations. If you do not know yourself in general and in particular, you cannot know what is too much for you.

The first question that arises about their exhortation *Nothing too much* is why they said this and not (or also) *nothing too little*. For surely the wise men saw that the bad happens not only by too much, but also by too little.

Three reasons come to mind why they said *nothing too much* rather than *nothing too little* (which they left to the reader to supply). First, more harm is probably done by too much than by too little in this world. More harm is done by drinking too much than by drinking too little. More harm is done by getting too angry than not angry enough. More harm is done by seeking one's own good too much than not enough. Second, men are more apt to err by too much than by too little. This is seen especially in the matter of temperance where men are apt to go to excess in the pursuit of what is pleasing to their senses. Men are apt to think they know more than they do rather than less than they do. Third, as Sherlock Holmes said, the chief gift of the artist is knowing when

to stop. Hence, Hamlet's advice to the players warns more about overdoing something than underdoing it.

It is difficult to be good said Pittacus. And perhaps this is the reason why, as Bias says, most men are bad and few are good. And Aristotle was to say later that virtue is about the good and the difficult. Someone might draw the conclusion that it is better to be ruled by the few than by the many if it is better to be ruled by the good than by the bad. However, if the few who rule are among the bad or even the worst, it is not better to be ruled by the few.

### HERACLITUS OF EPHESUS (prime about 500 B. C.)

It belongs to all men to know themselves and to be moderate  
(Heraclitus, DK 116)

In this fragment, Heraclitus combines the two exhortations of the Seven Wise Men. Shakespeare represents these two (knowing oneself and moderation or temperance) as going together in the Duke (*Measure for Measure*, Act III, Sc. 2):

Duke (in disguise): I pray you, sir, of what disposition was the Duke?

Escalus: One that, above all other strifes, contended especially to know himself.

Duke (in disguise): What pleasure was he given to?

Escalus: Rather rejoicing to see another merry, than merry at anything which professed to make him rejoice: a gentleman of all temperance.

I have sought out myself. (Heraclitus, DK 101)

Here Heraclitus touches upon the *difficulty* of obeying the exhortation to know yourself. It is not easy to know what one is in general (what is a man, what is the soul, what is reason) or in particular (the individual dispositions of one's body, soul or reason).

Moderation is the greatest virtue and wisdom is speak the truth and to act according to nature, giving ear thereto. (Heraclitus, DK 112)

This has been called *The Royal Fragment*. One cannot begin to do justice to it in a few words. We have considered it at length among the beginning fragments. But here we note the importance of moderation which fits the emphasis of the exhortation *Nothing too much*. And we cannot act in accord with our nature if we do not know ourself.

In Priene was born Bias, son of Teutamos, who has more reason than the rest. (Heraclitus, DK 39)

Heraclitus would seem to follow in the footsteps of the seven wise men for he continues their exhortations. And he praises one of them in particular, Bias of Priene, in this fragment. And he also follows a statement attributed to Bias (*the many are bad while few are good*).

The best men choose one thing rather than all else: everlasting fame [glory] among mortal men. The many are satisfied like beasts. (Heraclitus, DK 29)

If the many are satisfied like beasts, they pursue no good greater than those shared with the beast. Hence, they act as if they were no more than beasts. They do not know themselves. If the best pursue honor or glory, they seem more than beasts. Yet this is not yet to pursue the goods of the soul or reason, unless there is a connection between outward honor or glory and the inward goods of the soul. Do the best pursue honor or glory, or those goods of the soul from which true honor and glory are derived or to which they are due? The contrast of the best men pursuing honor or glory with other men can be seen in the *Iliad* of Homer.

The shortest way to honor [glory] is to become good. (Heraclitus, DK 135)

Here, a connection is made between being good and honor or glory. But is the end to be good or to be honored for being good? Aristotle was to address this question in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. We first see human virtue as a praiseworthy quality.

Character for man is a daemon. (Heraclitus, DK 119)

Some Greek words for happiness and misery are derived from the word *daemon* with *good* added for happiness and *bad* for misery. Perhaps, Heraclitus intends to insinuate here that our happiness or misery depends upon our (ethical) character, upon our human virtue or vice.

Gods and men honour those slain in war. (Heraclitus, DK 24)

The most honored virtue is courage. It is also the first one considered in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Both the Greek and Latin words for virtue seem connected with courage.

Souls of men slain in war are purer than those who die of disease.  
(Heraclitus, DK 136)

Is this because they die quicker or is it because they die more nobly? The soldier dies for his country and so that others might live.

Honours enslave gods and men. (Heraclitus, DK 132)

If men are honored for serving their country and others rather than themselves, they appear to be servants of others, if not slaves. Or perhaps the pursuit of honor as an end enslaves one to honor, just as the pursuit of money as an end enslaves one to money.

If happiness were in the pleasures of the body, we would call oxen happy when they find vetch to eat. (Heraclitus, DK 4)

Happiness is the chief good of man who is more than a beast. Hence, it cannot consist in something we have in common with the beast. If the chief good of man were no more than the chief good of a beast, man would be no more than a beast.

Asses prefer sweepings [litter] to gold. (Heraclitus, DK 9)

Pigs wash themselves in mud, birds in dust or ashes (Heraclitus, DK 37)

Do not delight in filth. (Heraclitus, DK 13)

Heraclitus forcefully urges us not to descend to the level of a beast.

A man, when he gets drunk, is led stumbling along by a beardless boy, not knowing where he is going, having the soul wet. (Heraclitus, DK 117)

The boy again is the one deficient in the use of reason. Hence, excess of the bottle is against the good of man since reason, more than anything else, is man.

The dry soul is wisest and best. (Heraclitus, DK 118)

The wet, although it easily receives a form, cannot hold a form. A wet soul cannot be formed in virtue or knowledge, but a dry one can. It is significant that Heraclitus couples the wisest soul and the best soul. Wisdom is the highest perfection of reason and reason is the best part of the soul. Hence, the wisest soul is also the best soul.

It is not better for men to obtain as much as they wish. (Heraclitus, DK 110)

Disease makes health pleasant and good; hunger, satisfaction; weariness [toil, labor], rest. (Heraclitus, DK 111)

The first statement would seem to be true for the goods of the body. The pleasures of the body seem to be preceded and made greater by something painful or disagreeable. Socrates talks about this in the *Phaedo* and elsewhere. It says something about the impurity or deficiency of these goods that they go with or after something bad.

It is hard to fight against anger; whatever it wishes, it buys at the expense of the soul. (Heraclitus, DK 85)

Moderation of anger is very important. Excessive anger is a temporary madness which is the badness of the soul. And anger in conversation prevents the soul from seeing clearly. More heat than light is generated. And anger can corrupt the rendering of justice.

It is not proper to be so a jester that you yourself appear laughable. (Heraclitus, DK 130)

There is a virtue in regard to the laughable. Men are apt to go to excess in the pursuit of the laughable.

One should quench arrogance rather than a conflagration.  
(Heraclitus, DK 43)

This excess comes from pride which is a spiritual intemperance, more in the will than in the emotions. Pride is a disordered or excessive desire for one's own excellence and contempt or scorn for others is a result of this.

Bad men are the adversaries of the true. (Heraclitus, DK 133)

Since good and bad are contraries, they are opposed. But the bad are more the adversaries of the good than the reverse. For the bad seek to harm the good while the good seek to change the bad for the better.

May wealth not fail you, men of Ephesus, so that you may be convicted of being wicked. (Heraclitus, DK 125a)

Wealth is used by the bad for bad things so that their possession of wealth helps to make known their badness by the use of it. Likewise, strength or power in a bad man will reveal his wickedness even more; for he will do many bad things with the help of this strength or power that he could not do without them.

Conceit [opinion forming] is the interruption [a hindrance] of progress. (Heraclitus, DK 131)

The proud man rests on his laurels, on the good opinion which he has formed of his work so far.

What understanding or mind is in them? They believe the poets of the people and take the crowd as their teacher, not knowing that "the many are bad while few are good." (The quote is attributed to Bias of Priênê.) (Heraclitus, DK 104)

To follow the poets is to take the imagination as your teacher rather than reason. And if the crowd prefer a life suitable to beasts (as Aristotle notes in the first book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*) in that they seek no good higher than that had by the beasts (the pleasures of eating, reproducing and sleeping), to

take the crowd as a teacher is to adopt the life of the beast. And aristocracy is better than democracy if the few are good and the many bad. But in the life of the mind, one can surely learn more from the few than from the many.

It would be right for all the Ephesians above age to strangle themselves and leave the city to beardless lads; for they cast out Hermodorus, the best man among them, saying "Let no man among us be the best; if there is one, let it be elsewhere and among others." (Heraclitus, DK 121)

This is an example of the many, and presumably the bad, opposing the good. But it is more particularly an example of the pride or envy of the little against the great. Heraclitus shows the unreasonableness of their action by a proportion. If they should cast out Hermodorus just because he is better than they are, they should cast themselves out because they are better than the beardless lads of the city. (And then the lads should turn it over to the beasts since they are better than the beasts.) This is a kind of reduction to the absurd of the democratic desire for complete equality among men.

One man is ten thousand to me if he be the best. (Heraclitus, DK 49)

Hermodorus would seem to be an example for Heraclitus of a man who is worth a whole city. Or Bias of Priene. When Plato thanked the gods for having met Socrates and left Athens after their condemnation of Socrates, he must have had similar thoughts. One can learn more from one great mind than from ten thousand ordinary minds.

Law is also to obey the counsel [advice, plan, design] of one. (Heraclitus, DK 33)

It is lawful to obey that one man who is worth ten thousand.

From the last few fragments, one might guess that Heraclitus is open more to an aristocratic government than to a democratic one. This would seem to follow from the beginning that few are good and the many are bad. Hence, rule by the many must be rule by the bad while only a government by the few could be government by the good. However, it is also possible that the few could be the worst among the many bad. Thus to be ruled by the few would either be better

or worse than to be ruled by the many. *Aristocracy* however means rule by the few best (*aristos* in Greek means *best*)

The people should fight for the law as if for their city-wall.  
(Heraclitus, DK 44)

It is easier to see how the city-wall protects the people than its law. But a little reflection will bring out the primacy of the law. It is not by chance that those who take office in the United States are first sworn to uphold the Constitution which is the fundamental law of the land.

Those who speak with understanding must be strong in what is common to all, as much as a city is strong in its law, and much more strongly. For all human laws are fed by one divine law which governs as far as it wishes and is enough for all and is left over and above all. (Heraclitus, DK 114)

This fragment is considered more properly with the road of reason. But it can be considered here insofar as Heraclitus sees in it that the law of the city or the written law is fed by a higher law which he here calls the *divine* law. The law of the city or nation should be measured by a higher law. If it is not, it may actually harm the people.

One's lot in life [or one's fortune] is a child playing a game of draughts; the kingdom belongs to a child. (Heraclitus, DK 52)

Perhaps Heraclitus compares fortune to a child because the child lacks the use of reason found in the man. Insofar as human life is subject to fortune, it seems to be without reason.

### EMPEDOCLES (prime about 450 B. C.)

Happy is he who has acquired the wealth of divine thoughts, but wretched the man in whom dwells dark [doubtful] opinions about the gods. (Empedocles, DK 132)

Since reason is the best part of the soul (which is better than the body) and the gods are the best thing reason considers, necessarily happiness consists chiefly

in knowing the truth about the gods. Hence, the opposite of this in reason must be most wretched or miserable.

But that which is lawful for all is ordered far stretching through the wide-ruling air and through the boundless light. (Empedocles, DK 135)

Like Heraclitus, Empedocles thinks there is a higher law for all men. He also sees it as dwelling perhaps in the higher elements, air and fire or light, not in the baser elements of water and earth.

Will ye not cease from this harsh-sounding slaughter [murder]? Do you not see that you are devouring one another with careless mind? (Empedocles, DK 136)

The father, changing form, having lifted up the beloved son, slaughters him offering a blind prayer. But they are troubled, sacrificing one who begs for mercy. But he, on the other hand, not hearing the one shouting, slaughters him in his halls and prepares the evil feast. Likewise son takes father, and children their mother, and tearing out the life, eat their own flesh. (Empedocles, DK 137)

These last two fragments seem to be condemnations by Empedocles of unnatural or bestial vices, vices which Aristotle considers to be below even human vice in the seventh book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

#### DEMOCRITUS OF ABDERA (fl. 420 B.C.)

#### ETHICAL FRAGMENTS

Good things scarcely come to those seeking, but bad things even to those not seeking. (Democritus, DK 108)

Learning with labours makes beautiful things, but ugly things are reaped by themselves without labours. (Democritus, DK 182)

In these two fragments, Democritus speaks of how special effort and learning are necessary to achieve good and beautiful things while bad and ugly things come without any effort on our part. Thus since everyone seeks, or should seek, good and beautiful things in life and should try to avoid bad and ugly things, special effort and even learning on our part are acquired.

For men, bad things come out of what is good, if one does not know how to guide and drive easily good things. It is not right to place such things among the bad, but in the good. It is possible also to use what is good for what is bad if one strongly wishes to do so. (Democritus, DK 173)

From the same from which good things come to us, we also partake of bad things, or else we can avoid the bad things. For example, deep water is useful for many purposes, and yet again bad; for there is danger of being drowned. A way out has been found: to teach swimming. (Democritus, DK 172)

Even from good things, bad things happen to man through his ignorance of how to use them or his desire to misuse them.

But the gods give to men all good things, both in the past and now. They do not, however, bestow things which are bad, harmful or useless, either in the past or now. But men themselves fall into these through blindness of mind and lack of sense. (Democritus, DK 175)

The gods are not responsible for the bad things that happen to men. Men, through their mental blindness and lack of judgment, are responsible for the bad things which happen to them.

For the foolish, not reason but misfortune becomes the teacher. (Democritus, DK 76)

Those without understanding are shaped by the tricks of fortune, but those who know these things by the wiles of wisdom. (Democritus, DK 197)

Those without understanding, suffering misfortune, learn sense. (Democritus, DK 54)

Fortune or luck is an accidental cause of what happens rarely as a result of actions done by reason for an end. Hence, fortune and reason are sometimes distinguished as causes in that what happens by fortune or luck is outside what is intended by reason while to the extent that something is subject to reason it is not by fortune or luck. Hence, the foolish who have a defect of reason are said to be taught by fortune rather than by reason. And since wisdom is the perfection of reason, one can similarly contrast those who are shaped by wisdom and those who are shaped by fortune. But the school of fortune is the proverbial school of hard knocks. To the extent that we live by reason, however, our life is not left to luck or fortune.

Education is an ornament for the fortunate, but a refuge for the unfortunate. (Democritus, DK 180)

Even the educated cannot escape misfortune, but they have a remedy for it from their education.

Men have made up a phantom of fortune as an excuse for their own lack of counsel. For chance rarely conflicts with foresight, and most things in life can be set right by a quickly grasping sharp-sightedness. (Democritus, DK 119)

Foresight is the virtue of reason which directs us in our actions. Counsel is a part of foresight. Men exaggerate the extent to which they are not responsible for the results of their lack of counsel and try to pass the responsibility over to fortune. But we are the cause of opposites by our counsel or the lack of it.

Fortune is munificent but uncertain. Nature, however, is sufficient in itself. Therefore it is victorious, by its lesser and sure means, over the greater promise of hope. (Democritus, DK 176)

A reason for trusting nature more than fortune. The foolish hope in fortune more.

The man who wishes to have serenity of spirit should not engage in many activities, either private or public, nor choose activities beyond his ability and nature. He must guard against this, so that when good fortune strikes him and leads him on to excess by means of seeming, he must put it aside, and not fasten upon things

beyond his powers. A moderate amount is safer than a huge one.  
(Democritus, DK 3)

Fortune bestows too much upon some and this leads them to attempt foolishly things beyond their powers. Again, we see the wisdom of the exhortation *Nothing too much*.

The hopes of right-thinking men are easy to reach, but those of men without understanding are impossible. (Democritus, DK 58)

The hopes of reasonable men are based on nature and foresight, but those without understanding are based on fortune and imagination. Hence, the former are often possible and the latter often impossible to be realized.

The hopes of the educated are better than the wealth of the unlearned. (Democritus, DK 185)

The uneducated do not even know how to use the wealth they may happen to have. But the hopes of the educated are founded on nature and reason and therefore more possible.

The hopes of those without understanding are unreasonable.  
(Democritus, DK 292)

They are unreasonable because they are based, not on nature, but on fortune and imagination and come from unreasonable desire.

It is unreasonableness not to submit to the necessary things in life.  
(Democritus, DK 289)

Reason must accept what cannot be changed. It pertains to wisdom to discern what can and what cannot be changed.

The man using exhortation and reasonable persuasion leads better to virtue than he who uses law and force. For the man who is prevented by law from wrongdoing will likely do wrong in secret, whereas the man led towards what is right by persuasion is not likely to do something out of tune either secretly or openly. Therefore the man who acts rightly with understanding and

knowledge becomes at the same time brave and judges rightly.  
(Democritus, DK 181)

The classical reason why persuasion is better than force in becoming good and avoiding what is bad.

Reason is far stronger than gold in persuasion. (Democritus, DK 51)

Gold does not persuade us within even if it helps to get outward cooperation. But reason persuades within.

Many not learning reason live according to reason. (Democritus, DK 53)

The man who has been brought up well has acquired reasonable habits whereby he is disposed to live reasonably without thinking about it. To be reasonable has become second nature to him.

### Happiness

Happiness and unhappiness belong to the soul. (Democritus, DK 170)

If happiness is to live well and unhappiness to live badly, and we live by the soul, then happiness and unhappiness must be chiefly in the soul. And if the living body is better than the non-living body by its soul, then the soul is what is best in living bodies. Therefore, the chief or greatest good of man which is happiness will be found primarily in the best part of man, the soul. Hence, also his greatest evil, unhappiness, will be found in his soul.

Happiness does not dwell in flocks of cattle or in gold. The soul is the dwelling-place of the daemon. (Democritus, DK 171)

The Greek word for happiness here (*eudaimonia*) includes the word *daemon*. If the daemon is in the soul, then happiness is also there. Socrates often refers to his daemon. This bears some likeness to what Christians call a guardian angel. A consequence of happiness being where the daemon is, is that happiness cannot be in our exterior possessions.

Men find happiness neither by means of the body nor through possessions, but through uprightness and fullness of understanding. (Democritus, DK 40)

Underlying this statement is the division of all human goods into those of the soul, those of the body and exterior or outside goods. If happiness is in the soul, we will achieve happiness chiefly through the goods of the soul. If happiness is our greatest good and the goods of the soul are greater than the goods of the body and outside goods, then it is also reasonable to see happiness as achieved primarily through the goods of the soul. Hence, ethics, which is about happiness, considers most of all the goods of the soul. This involves the good of reason (fullness of understanding) and perhaps the good of the will (uprightness).

#### Goods of the Soul, Goods of the Body, and Outside Goods

He who chooses the goods of the soul chooses things more divine, but he who chooses those of the body, chooses human things. (Democritus, DK 37)

No one thinks that the body is more godlike than the soul. If the soul is more like God than the body (hence, some say that the soul is made in the image of God), then the goods of the soul are more godlike than the goods of the body. Hence, too, since God is thought by all to be better than us, the goods of the soul must also be better than those of the body.

The beauty of the body is animalistic if understanding is not present. (Democritus, DK 105)

Since reason or understanding is what distinguishes man from the beast or mere animal, the subtraction of understanding leaves man a mere animal. But when the body's emotions and movements are directed by reason, they seem to share in something of the higher.

The wrongdoer is more wretched than the man wronged. (Democritus, DK 45)

This is the surprising conclusion from the goods of the soul being so much greater than the goods of the body and outside goods. The wrongdoer suffers in his soul the loss of the greatest goods while the man wronged suffers the loss of the much lesser goods, either of the body or outward goods. This conclusion (which Socrates also brings out so often) is paradoxical and seems unlikely to the man in the street.

It is fitting that men should take more account of the soul than of the body; for perfection of soul corrects the badness of the body, but strength of the body without reason does nothing to make the soul better. (Democritus, DK 187 or 36)

The medical art and the virtue of moderation are goods of the soul which benefit the body. But the strength of the body is not incompatible with a foolish and intemperate soul. This is a secondary reason for preferring the good of the soul over the good of the body.

It belongs to a divine understanding to be always thinking over something beautiful. (Democritus, DK 112)

The beautiful is found only in the higher senses, the senses of sight and hearing. The lower senses are tied to the pleasures which we share with the other animals. But the beautiful introduces us to something higher.

The good things of youth are strength and beauty, but the flower of old age is moderation. (Democritus, DK 294)

The young rejoice in the goods of their body but the old have more to rejoice in if they have acquired the goods of the soul.

The old man has been young; but the young man cannot know if he will reach old age. Further, the perfect good is better than the future and uncertain good. (Democritus, DK 295)

The fool says to Lear that he is old before his time because he was old before he was wise. One must not delay till old age the pursuit of the goods of the soul.

### Pleasure

The measure of the useful and the useless is pleasure and lack of pleasure. (Democritus, DK 188)

Pleasure and absence of pleasure are the measure of what is useful and what is useless. (Democritus, DK 4)

The consideration of pleasure is close to the consideration of happiness. In Book Ten of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle considers pleasure and then happiness, both of which seem to be a result of virtue. In the above two fragments, Democritus seems close to those like the Epicureans in ancient times and the utilitarians in modern times who make pleasure the measure of good and bad.

Accept no pleasure that it is not useful. (Democritus, DK 74)

How should one understand *useful* here? If in the narrow sense, then why should one be interested in the beautiful? Or does Democritus merely want us to avoid pursuing pleasures that harm us or that are connected with something that harms us, either in body or soul?

Good and true are the same for all men; but the pleasant differs for different men. (Democritus, DK 69)

Here Democritus distinguishes between the pleasant and the good and the true. The former is not the same for all men, but the good and the true are. This is easier to see about the true. The same statement cannot be true for one man and false for another. By *same* we mean with the same subject and predicate and copula. A statement such as *two is half of four* or *Socrates is sitting* is either true or false. Some may know that it is true or false and some may not. But in itself the statement is either true (because it says what-is is or what-is-not is not) or false (because it says what-is is not or what-is-not is.) Some statements like *Socrates is sitting* may be true at one time and false at another time, but there is never a time when it is *both* true and false. Since what fits a thing is good for it, and men have a common nature, what fits this common nature is good for all men. Thus to be reasonable is good for all men. And to be wise and to be just and to be moderate and to be courageous is also good for all men. But there are individual differences among men so that what is good for one man may not be altogether the same for another man. But what is pleasant

for one man and for another man may be different, not only because of their individual inborn differences, but also because of the dispositions of soul they have acquired. Those who have acquired dispositions that fit our common nature and those who have acquired dispositions that are not in harmony with our common nature will delight also in different things.

This fragment also raises the question of whether Democritus sees pleasure as the ultimate criterion of action.

Pigs revel in rubbish. (Democritus, DK 147)

This also makes one wonder whether Democritus thinks pleasure is the ultimate criterion of good and bad.

The best way for a man to lead his life is to have been as cheerful as possible and to have suffered as little as possible. This could happen if one did not make his pleasures in mortal things. (Democritus, DK 189)

The first statement in this fragment seems to make pleasure and the absence of pain the measure of the best life, something to which neither Plato nor Aristotle would agree. In the second statement on how the maximum of pleasure and the minimum of pain is to be achieved, we are given the negative advice not to seek our pleasures in mortal things. This refers to human rather than divine things and therefore to the pleasures of the body. Aristotle was to say in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, that we should strive after the immortal so far as possible.

Those without understanding live without enjoyment of life. (Democritus, DK 200)

Those without understanding do not know where true pleasure is to be found. Hence, they live without true enjoyment of life

Those without understanding yearn for long life without pleasure in long life. (Democritus, DK 201)

If pleasure is the measure of the good life, then it seems foolish to want to live without pleasure. However, there seems to be a desire for life in man which he does not easily forego even when his life is difficult.

If one oversteps the due measure, the most pleasurable things become most unpleasant. (Democritus, DK 233)

Moderation multiplies pleasures, and makes pleasure still greater. (Democritus, DK 211)

These truths about pleasure and moderation seem to be especially applicable to the pleasures of the body.

All who make their pleasures from the stomach, overstepping due measure in foods or drinks or sexual pleasures, have pleasures that are but brief and short-lived, so long as they are eating and drinking, but pains that are many. For this desire is always present for the same things, and when people get what they desire, the pleasure passes quickly, and they have nothing good for themselves except a brief enjoyment; and then again they have need for the same things. (Democritus, DK 235)

This applies the previous two fragments to the pleasures of the body. And how quickly these pleasures diminish and pass away.

Men get pleasure from scratching themselves: they feel an enjoyment like that of lovemaking. (Democritus, DK 127)

Plato has the reduction to the absurd of pursuing, as much as one can, pleasures like that of scratching.

Men ask in their prayers for health from the gods, but do not know that the power to attain this lies in themselves; and by doing the opposite through lack of control, they themselves become the betrayers of health to their desires. (Democritus, DK 234)

Often the excessive pursuit of the pleasures of the body leads to sickness. It is laughable for such men to pray for health when the remedy lies in their own power of being moderate.

Untimely pleasures bring forth unpleasantness. (Democritus, DK 71)

This is another warning of the folly of pursuing pleasure out of order or without moderation. Aristotle in the second book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* also warns us about pleasure in his three rules for acquiring moral virtue.

Of pleasures, those that come most rarely please the most.  
(Democritus, DK 232)

This complicates life for those trying to maximize their pleasures. It points perhaps to the need to have many kinds of pleasure in life. Variety is the spice of life.

The great pleasures come from looking at noble works.  
(Democritus, DK 194)

This is good advice on where to look for pleasure.

One should not choose every pleasure, but only that concerned with the beautiful [the noble]. (Democritus, DK 207)

There are pleasures concerned with the necessities of life. Since one *must* eat and sleep etc., one can enjoy the pleasures associated with these activities. But one should not choose such pleasures for their own sake apart from these necessary acts. Such pleasures diminish as the body's need is satisfied and trying to prolong them easily leads to pain or discomfort. But one should choose more for their own sake the immaterial or spiritual pleasures tied to the beautiful and noble.

They think divine things with their mind. (Democritus, DK 129)

The reason itself accustomed to take its pleasures from itself.  
(Democritus, DK 146)

The educated reason can take pleasure in itself or by itself. Hence, those who want to maximize their pleasures should educate their reason. These pleasures have the least dependence upon the exterior.

All labours are pleasanter than rest, when men attain that for which they labour, or know that they will attain it. But likewise labour is annoying and distressing in failure. (Democritus, DK 243)

Who are more pleased: the idle or those who labor? The pleasure of success is enjoyed only by those who labor. And this success or the anticipation of it also diminishes the pain of labor. But the idle are without activity while pleasure seems to accompany good acts.

Cheerfulness [or tranquility] comes to be in men through moderation of pleasure and due proportion of life. Things that are in defect or in excess like to change and cause great disturbance in the soul. Souls which are moved by great differences are neither cheerful nor stable. Therefore one must keep one's mind on what is possible and be satisfied with what one has, little remembering things envied and admired, and not dwelling on them in thought. Rather must you consider the lives of those suffering much, reflecting on what they undergo so much, so that what is present and belongs to you may seem great and enviable, and you may no longer suffer in your soul by desiring more. For he who admires those who have, and who are called happy by other men, and who dwells on them in his mind every hour, is always forced to undertake something new and attempt, through his desire, doing something irreparable among those things which the laws prohibit. Hence one must not seek the latter, but must be content with the former, comparing one's own life with that of those passing through worse things, and must consider oneself blessed, keeping in mind what they suffer, in doing and living better than they. If you keep to this way of thinking, you will live more serenely, and will expel those not small curses in life, envy, jealousy and ill will. (Democritus, DK 191)

The envious man torments [pains] himself like an enemy. (Democritus, DK 88)

In these fragments, Democritus warns against envy as a source of pain. We must train ourselves not to envy those better off than us, but rather we must consider how we are better off than others and be satisfied with our lot in life.

Some men, not knowing the dissolution of mortal nature, but conscious of evil-doing in life, distress the time of life with disturbances and fears, fabricating false myths about the time after the end of life. (Democritus, DK 297)

They are without understanding who hate life and yet wish to live through fear of Hades. (Democritus, DK 199)

Democritus would seem to differ from Plato and Aristotle who held that the soul of man is immortal. Socrates in the *Phaedo* investigates whether the soul is immortal and, if so, whether it is better off then. Plato also has Socrates speak of a judgment of souls after death.

Those without understanding cannot please anyone in the whole of life. (Democritus, DK 204)

This would seem to include even themselves. They have no true pleasures.

Old age is a complete mutilation. It has all and lacks in all. (Democritus, DK 296)

Those without understanding long for life because they fear death. (Democritus, DK 205)

Those without understanding, fearing death, want to live to be old. (Democritus, DK 206)

Life without pleasure does not seem worth living for Democritus. But is it unreasonable to fear death? Death is the loss of life. Some have tried to say, of course, that when we are dead, nothing bad can come to us. For we are not and nothing can happen to what is not. Yet reason naturally sees that it is good to be.

### Good and Bad Deeds

If any man gives ear to my maxims with understanding, he will do many things worthy of a good man, and not do many bad things. (Democritus, DK 35)

The instructions of Democritus here have something in common with proverbs which contract much experience in a few words.

To praise noble deeds is noble; for to do so over bad deeds is the work of a base and deceiving man. (Democritus, DK 63)

Men first come to know the goodness or badness of a deed by what is outside it – the praise or dispraise of it. This is especially true for the child. Only later, if ever, do we know it inwardly, why it is good or bad. Hence, the great importance of praising good deeds, but not bad deeds.

One must either be good, or imitate a good man. (Democritus, DK 39)

It is a grievous thing to imitate the bad, and not even wish to imitate the good. (Democritus, DK 79)

Man is the most imitative of the animals and, at first, we learn by imitation. This is true of virtue as well as of other things. And indeed the virtuous man is the measure. But it is a terrible thing when we imitate the bad. Hence, one's companions, or those with whom one associates, must be carefully chosen.

Those naturally suited for noble deeds know and emulate them. (Democritus, DK 56)

There is a natural inclination for (at least some) virtues more in some men than in others.

One should emulate the deeds and actions of virtue, not the words. (Democritus, DK 55)

The word *indeed* is perhaps a sign of the truth of this statement. Friendship is shown, for example, more in deeds than in words. Hence, there is a kind of pun to be seen in the saying that *a friend in need is a friend indeed*. Virtue consists more in the doing than in the words.

Speech is the shadow of action. (Democritus, DK 145)

The false and the seeming-good are those who do all in word, not in deed. (Democritus, DK 82)

Many doing the most shameful things practise the best words. (Democritus, DK 53a)

Speech is not the substance of good action. Rather it is to good action as a shadow is to a body. A shadow bears a likeness to the body, but is not the body. One should not be deceived by likeness, either in ourselves or in others. We must not mistake our good words, or their good words, for the substance of good action.

Neither can fine speech hide base action, nor can good action be disfigured by slander. (Democritus, DK 177)

It is said that *actions speak louder than words*. We eventually judge a man by what he does, not by what he says, when this is in contradiction with what he does.

The cheerful man, who is led toward works that are just and lawful, rejoices by day and by night, and is strong and free from care. But the man who takes no heed of justice, and does not do what he ought, to him all such things displeasing when he remembers any of them, and he is afraid and reproaches himself. (Democritus, DK 174)

Good deeds are naturally more pleasing than bad deeds. And one's mind or conscience is more at rest after the former than after the latter.

They alone are dear to the gods to whom wrongdoing is hateful. (Democritus, DK 217)

If it is important that man be pleasing to the gods or the friendship of the gods is helpful to man, then man must in his heart hate wrongdoing.

Good is not to avoid wrongdoing, but not to wish it. (Democritus, DK 62)

A man is good, not alone because he does not do what is wrong, but because he has no desire to do so.

Refrain from bad deeds not through fear but through duty. (Democritus, DK 41)

The man who refrains from bad deeds through fear of being caught and punished is not really a good man. Hence, Plato in the *Republic*, Book II (359D)

*seq.*) tells the story of the ring of Gyges. If one could become invisible by turning the ring, would one refrain from evil-doing?

To yield to the law, the ruler, and the wiser man is moderate [well ordered]. (Democritus, DK 47)

There are different reasons for obeying each of these.

It is better to deliberate before action than to repent afterwards. (Democritus, DK 66)

This is a similar truth to that in the saying *Act in haste, repent at leisure*.

To be always thinking of doing makes actions unfinished. (Democritus, DK 81)

This is to avoid the *Hamlet* complex.

It is better to censure one's own faults than those of others. (Democritus, DK 60)

This is so because it increases one's humility rather than one's pride and also because it will lead one to correct one's faults.

It is shameful to be so busy over the affairs of others that one does not know one's own. (Democritus, DK 80)

One must set one's own house in order before one's neighbour's house.

The man who does shameful deeds must first feel shame himself. (Democritus, DK 84)

Although shame is more naturally felt in the presence of others, if one does not feel shame before oneself, one will not be apt to be good by oneself. One will be good in appearance only

One must not respect the other men more than one's self; nor must one be more ready to do wrong if no one will know than if all men will know. One must respect oneself especially and lay down as the law for the soul, to do nothing unfit. (Democritus, DK 264)

Neither say nor do what is base, even when you are alone. Learn to feel shame by yourself much more than before others. (Democritus, DK 244)

This is part of what it means to be ruled by reason. One must listen to reason and not to oneself.

One must avoid even speech about bad deeds. (Democritus, DK 190)

St. Paul gives similar advice in the *Epistles*.

It is a great thing in misfortune to think of what one ought [to do]. (Democritus, DK 42)

Misfortune is often an excuse for wrong-doing.

It is noble to prevent the wrongdoer; but if one cannot, one should not join him in wrongdoing. (Democritus, DK 38)

The latter is always in our power, but the former many times is not.

To live badly is not to live badly, but to spend a long time dying. (Democritus, DK 160)

The one who lives badly is more dying than living. He does not know how to live. Sin is nothing said Augustine and the man who sins becomes nothing. The bad is always a lack, the non-being of something one should have.

Repentance over shameful deeds is the saving of life. (Democritus, DK 43)

If doing shameful or bad deeds is more dying than living, only repentance can turn one away from such deeds and back to life.

The cause of wrong-doing is ignorance of the better. (Democritus, DK 83)

Everyone who does wrong is mistaken. However, this does not mean that virtue is knowledge as Socrates thought. Moreover, we are often the cause of our own ignorance in choice.

### The Virtues

The worthy and the unworthy man (*are to be known*) not only from what they do, but also from what they wish. (Democritus, DK 68)

Virtue consists not only in outward actions, but also and even more in the inward rectitude of the heart.

Right love is to desire without insolence the fair. (Democritus, DK 73)

The Greek word for love here is *eros* which names a need-love. Such love should be humble for desire, as Socrates explains in the *Symposium*, is for what one lacks.

It is easy to praise and blame what one should not, but both belong to a corrupt character. (Democritus, DK 192)

When bad men find fault, the good man takes no account. (Democritus, DK 48)

Honours are worth much to right-thinking men, who understand why they are being honoured. (Democritus, DK 95)

Virtue is an honorable or praiseworthy quality and vice is a dishonorable or blameworthy quality. However, one must take into account who is being honored or praised by whom and for what.

In all things, the equal is fair, overshooting and falling short not so it seems to me. (Democritus, DK 102)

Those whose character is well-ordered have also a well-ordered life. (Democritus, DK 61)

Virtue lies in the middle or mean between excess and defect. Virtue is also a well-ordered character. Those who have virtue are then apt to have a well-ordered life (and one that avoids unreasonable extremes).

Nobility of birth in cattle depends on the health of the body, but that of men on the good disposition of character. (Democritus, DK 57)

More men become good through practice than by nature. (Democritus, DK 242)

Nature and teaching are similar; for teaching transforms the man, and in transforming him, makes a [second] nature. (Democritus, DK 33)

Men are more made good by practice than born good. Their goodness is more a second nature than the nature in which they are born. Thus moral virtues and vices are *customary* virtues or vices (that is, by custom) more than *natural* virtues or vices (that is, inborn or by birth).

Continuous association with base men increases a disposition to wickedness [badness]. (Democritus, DK 184)

Men also become bad by being accustomed to it in the company of bad men. Man is by nature a social animal and acquires virtues or vices to some extent from those with whom one lives or associates.

Toils undertaken willingly make the endurance of those done unwillingly easier. (Democritus, DK 240)

Doing what is difficult even when it is not necessary prepares one for doing what is difficult when it is necessary.

Continuous labor becomes easier by being accustomed to it. (Democritus, DK 241)

Virtue is a habit which makes activity in accord with it easier.

There is an understanding in the young, and a lack of understanding in the old. For time does not teach foresight, but early bringing up and nature. (Democritus, DK 183)

Foresight, the virtue that directs us in our actions, depends upon an understanding gotten in part by nature and in part by how we have been brought up in life.

Medicine heals diseases of the body, but wisdom frees the soul of passions. (Democritus, DK 31)

Wisdom is the perfection of reason which Shakespeare calls the physician to our soul. Hence, Wisdom personified visits Boethius in the *Consolation of Philosophy* and proceeds to free him from his passions.

Courage makes difficulties small. (Democritus, DK 213)

Forgetfulness of one's own ills breeds boldness. (Democritus, DK 196)

Boldness is the beginning of action, but Fortune is the lord of the end. (Democritus, DK 269)

Men, fleeing death, pursue it. (Democritus, DK 203)

The first virtue considered in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is courage which also seems to be the one most honored. Courage is about what is most difficult, to stay and fight for the good of one's country. But virtue makes what is in accord with it easier. Hence, true courage makes the difficulty seem small. The courageous man thinks of the good of his country rather than of his own danger and becomes bold in the defense of his country. But the boldness does not determine necessarily the outcome of his action. Fortune plays a large role in war. However, as Caesar says in Shakespeare's play, the brave taste of death but once, but cowards die many times.

To desire without measure belongs to a child, not to a man. (Democritus, DK 70)

The second virtue considered in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is temperance or moderation (in the pleasures of eating and drinking and reproducing). A child

left to himself is apt to desire these pleasures to excess. But reason, which is more developed in the man, should moderate the desire for these pleasures. But just as a child left to his own will becomes unruly, so too our ability to desire these pleasures becomes unruly if we do not deny ourselves.

Violent desires for one thing blind the soul to all others.  
(Democritus, DK 72)

This blindness is voluntary in that it is in our power to learn moderation.

For self-sufficiency in food, a little night never comes. (Democritus, DK 209)

Does this touch upon a Greek saying? It is usually not difficult to get enough.

The animal needing something knows how much it needs, the man does not. (Democritus, DK 198)

The animals are taught moderation more by nature than man. Man needs upbringing and practice.

The brave man is not only he who is stronger than the enemy, but he who is stronger than pleasures. Some men are masters of cities, but are enslaved to women. (Democritus, DK 214)

Since courage is the virtue most known and admired, Democritus here assimilates moderation in a way to courage. Every virtue seems to involve some strength of soul.

If the body brought a suit against the soul, for all the pains it had endured throughout this life, and the body suffered, and I were to be judge of the accusation, I would vote in condemnation of the soul, in that it had partly ruined the body by its neglect and dissolved it with drunkenness, and partly destroyed it and torn it in pieces with its love of pleasure – as if, when a tool or a vessel were in bad condition, I blamed the man who was using it carelessly. (Democritus, DK 159)

Sleep in the daytime signifies disturbance of the body or distress of the soul or laziness, or lack of education (Democritus, DK 212)

Intemperance is bad for the body as well as for the soul.

Fame and wealth without understanding are not safe possessions.  
(Democritus, DK 77)

After the virtues which concern our body in some way (either what endangers it or pleases it), courage and moderation, one should consider the virtues which concern exterior or outside goods such as money and honor. These are not good without a well disposed reason. Hence, as in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we need to consider the virtues concerned with money and honor.

The employment of money with understanding is useful towards being liberal and the common good, but without understanding, it is a common means. (Democritus, DK 282)

The reasonable use of money pertains to the virtue of liberality or generosity and also it pertains to the common good (and the virtue of munificence), but without understanding, it is a very ordinary means.

Thrift and fasting are useful; so too is expenditure at the right time.  
But to know this belongs to a good man. (Democritus, DK 229)

Both the conserving of money and its expenditure belong to the man of virtue.

To procure money is not without use, but if it comes from wrongdoing, nothing is worse. (Democritus, DK 78)

Wealth derived from evil doing makes the disgrace more evident.  
(Democritus, DK 218)

Evil gains bring loss of virtue. (Democritus, DK 220)

The hope of evil gain is the beginning of damage. (Democritus, DK 221)

It also pertains to the virtues concerned with money that it be acquired as it should and not from any bad source.

The generous man is not the one looking for a return, but the one choosing to do good. (Democritus, DK 96)

The truly liberal man is pleased more in giving as he should than in expecting a return.

Little favours at the right time are greatest to those receiving. (Democritus, DK 94)

When you do a favour, first examine the one receiving, lest being false, he give back evil for good. (Democritus, DK 93)

Accept favours foreseeing that you will have to give back greater gifts for them. (Democritus, DK 92)

Many things must be observed in giving money to others. One must give to the good and at an opportune time. And in receiving favors, the liberal man will give back more than he has received.

Luck supplies an extravagant table, but foresight a sufficient one. (Democritus, DK 210)

Foresight is not concerned with extravagance, but it does provide enough for one's circumstances.

The things which the body needs are easily available to all without toil or hardship. But the things which require toil and hardship and distress life, are not desired by the body, but by the bad-disposition of the mind. (Democritus, DK 223)

The man with rectified desire for material goods does not need to labor excessively.

One should realize that human life is weak [feeble] and brief and mixed with many cares and hardships, in order that one may care only for moderate possessions, and that hardship may be measured by necessities. (Democritus, DK 285)

Living abroad one's life teaches self-sufficiency; for bread and bed are the sweetest cures for hunger and fatigue. (Democritus, DK 246)

One should have moderate desires for material goods. One way this can be learned is by living abroad.

He is fortunate who is cheerful with moderate possessions, but unfortunate who is melancholy with great possessions. (Democritus, DK 286)

Content need not be proportional to what one has. The one who has less may be more contented than the one who has more.

If your desires are not for much, little will seem much to you; for small desire makes poverty equivalent to wealth. (Democritus, DK. 284)

The desire for wealth, unless limited by satisfaction, is far harder to bear than extreme poverty; for greater desires make greater needs [lacks]. (Democritus, DK 219)

Poverty and wealth are names for lack and satiety; so that he who lacks is not wealthy, and he who does not lack is not poor. (Democritus, DK 283)

Poverty and wealth, insofar as they affect human beings, depend upon our desires and supposed needs.

Those who yearn for what is absent, but neglect what is present being more profitable than what has gone, are without understanding. (Democritus, DK 202)

The reasonable man is he who is not saddened by what he has not, but enjoys what he has. (Democritus, DK 231)

The desire for more loses what one has, having become like the dog in Aesop. (Democritus, DK 224)

Men who always desire more are less satisfied with what they have. Such souls are in a way a torment to themselves.

Misers have the fate of the bee; they work as if they were going to live forever. (Democritus, DK 227)

The children of misers, if they are reared in ignorance, are like those dancers who leap between swords: if they miss, in their leap downwards, a single place where they must plant their feet, they are destroyed. But it is hard to alight upon the one spot, because only the space for the feet is left. So too with the children of misers: if they miss the paternal character of carefulness and thrift, they are apt to be destroyed. (Democritus, DK 228)

The miser, who has excessive desire for material goods, torments himself and endangers his own children's happiness.

To bear poverty well belongs to a sensible man. (Democritus, DK 291)

But if the reasonable man should fall into poverty without his fault, he will bear this better than other men.

It is greatness of soul to bear mildly offence. (Democritus, DK 46)

Greatness of soul is a virtue concerned with great honors or with that which is greatly honored. What is here said by Democritus seems contrary to Homer's representation of Achilles and Agamemnon in their anger as magnanimous men.

It is hard to fight anger; but to control it belongs to a reasonable man. (Democritus, DK 236)

Drive back well the anger continuing in thy breast, and take care not to disturb thy soul, and do not let all things come always to the tongue. (Democritus, DK 298a doubtful)

Another passion which must be moderated by reason is anger.

Cast forth unmastered grief from your benumbed soul by reason. (Democritus, DK 290)

Here we are urged to free ourselves by reason from being enslaved to the passion of grief. Sadness can cause anger that Reason cannot do this if our ability to feel passions has not been somewhat disposed to hear and obey reason.

After the virtues concerned with exterior goods such as money and honor, one can consider the virtue concerned with exterior evils, like insults, which arouse anger.

One should tell the truth, not speak at length. (Democritus, DK 44 or 225)

The life without festival is a long road without an inn. (Democritus, DK 230)

After the virtue concerned with anger, Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* considers three virtues about what is pleasant in human acts and words or with truth in them. One of the virtues concerned with the pleasant is in laughable matters. This is necessary in human life: one must relax and pause on our journey at some time.

Justice is to do what should be done; injustice is to fail to do what should be done, and to put it aside. (Democritus, DK 256)

Justice here seems to mean all virtue.

The cheerful man, who is impelled toward works that are just and lawful, rejoices by day and by night, and is strong and free from care. But the man who neglects justice, and does not do what he ought, finds all such things disagreeable when he remembers any of them, and he is afraid and torments himself. (Democritus, DK 174)

The glory of justice is confidence of judgment and imperturbability, but the end of injustice is the fear of misfortune. (Democritus, DK 215)

Plato devotes the *Republic* to showing the different results for men from justice and injustice.

The man completely enslaved to wealth can never be just.  
(Democritus, DK 50)

The man who desires wealth too much will take more than his share which is unjust.

Bad men, when they escape, do not keep the oaths which they make in time of necessity. (Democritus, DK 239)

The keeping of oaths is a matter of justice.

It is the work of foresight to guard against a threatened injustice, but it is the mark of insensibility not to avenge it when it has happened. (Democritus, DK 193)

After the moral virtues, we should consider in ethics the virtues of reason. Foresight is the virtue of reason that directs us in our actions

Imperturbable [without amazement] wisdom is worth everything.  
(Democritus, DK 216)

The greatest virtue of reason is wisdom.

### Friendship

Life is not worthwhile for the one who has not even one good friend. (Democritus, DK 99)

Aristotle's second reason for considering friendship in the eighth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* begins with a similar statement. Man is by nature a social animal. His greatest good, happiness, is something he wants not only for himself, but also for other men, especially for those close to him. We want to share a joke with others; and if we see something beautiful, we want others to see it with us.

It is fitting, being men, not to laugh at the misfortunes of others, but to lament them. (Democritus, DK 107a)

Those to whom their neighbours' misfortunes give pleasure do not understand that the things of fortune are common to all; and also they lack cause for their own joy. (Democritus, DK 293)

It is natural to love and therefore pity other men. For likeness is the cause of love and pity. Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book Two, gives rejoicing in the misfortune of others as something that is always bad. But to rejoice at the misfortune of others is also to forget that we are subject to misfortune as well. Hence, in tragedy, the emotions moved are both pity and fear.

All relatives are not friends, but those agreeing about the useful.  
(Democritus, DK 107)

All friendship seems to be based on some good that is common to the friends.

The enmity of relatives is much worse than that of strangers.  
(Democritus, DK 90)

One reason why it is worse is that we are not on guard, or less on guard, against our relatives than strangers. We expect good from our relatives, but do not know what to expect from strangers.

The man who loves nobody is, it seems to me, loved by no one.  
(Democritus, DK 103)

Nothing so invites love for another as the experience of the other's love for oneself. And this also would seem to pertain to friendship that there is mutual love. If love is not returned, there cannot be friendship.

Many who seem to be friends are not so, and those who do not seem so, are. (Democritus, DK 97)

Many would rather appear to be our friends than be our friends. But are those friends in the full sense who do not know their mutual good will?

In prosperity it is easy to find a friend, in adversity nothing is so difficult. (Democritus, DK 106)

Many avoid their friends when they fall from wealth to poverty.  
(Democritus, DK 101)

Democritus here describes those who love themselves and not truly their “friend”. They love another, not for the other’s own sake, but insofar as the other is useful to them. Hence, the truth of the saying *A friend in need is a friend indeed*. And Boethius says that one of the advantages of misfortune over fortune is that it enables one to know who is one’s real or true friend. Useful friends are not friends in the full sense.

An enemy is not he who injures, but he who wishes to do so.  
(Democritus, DK 89)

Friendship, like virtue, is not only in the exterior act, but also in the interior desire. And perhaps more so in that the exterior act is not always in one’s power.

The friendship of one who understands is better than that of all who do not understand. (Democritus, DK 98)

One good friend is better than many bad friends. With fools as friends, one does not need enemies.

Animals flock together with animals of the same kind, as doves with doves, and cranes with cranes, and similarly with the rest of the animals. So it is with inanimate things, as one can see it is with sifted seeds and with the pebbles on the beaches. In the former, through the circulation of the sieve, beans are separated and ranged with beans, barley-grains with barley, and wheat with wheat; in the latter, with the motion of the wave, oval pebbles are driven to the same place as oval, and round to round, as if the likeness in these things had a sort of power over them which had brought them together. (Democritus, DK 164)

Like thinking makes friendship. (Democritus, DK 186)

Likeness *as such* is a cause of liking or loving and of friendship. Since *reason* more than anything else is man, among men *like thinking* especially is the likeness that causes friendship.

Those loving to find fault are not well-fitted for friendship.  
(Democritus, DK 109)

The man whose tested friends do not stay long with him is hard to turn. (Democritus, DK 100)

An old man is pleasant if wily and his speech serious.  
(Democritus, DK 104)

Since living together is characteristic of friends, and it is hard to live together with someone who is unpleasant and fault-finding, whether due to temperament or old age, there are some who for these reasons are not well-fitted for friendship.

Friendship involves mutual good will. Flattery is not a sign of good will. Brutus (in *Julius Caesar*) distinguishes between a true friend and a flatterer.

It is better to be praised by another than by oneself. (Democritus, DK 114)

One can be easily deceived about how good one is and often another can more clearly see the good or bad in us.

Those who praise men without understanding do great harm.  
(Democritus, DK 113)

A true friend understands what is good and bad in us and encourages the one and discourages the other.

If you do not understand the praise, believe that you are being flattered. (Democritus, DK 115)

This is a rule to be followed in winnowing deserved praise from flattery.

Fear practises flattery, but it has no good will. (Democritus, DK 268)

We often flatter people rather than tell the truth out of fear of what will happen if we say what we really think. A true friend is not a flatterer. A true friend does

not praise where such praise is not deserved and especially where he sees a fault in his friend. Rather he would try to improve his friend where this is possible. When Democritus says it has no good will, he is clearly seeing such flattery as not a part of true friendship.

### DOMESTIC FRAGMENTS

Disease of the home and life comes about in the same way as that of the body. (Democritus, DK 288)

Disease of the body is a result of the lack of harmony of the parts or of their being disproportioned to each other. Likewise, the harmony and proportion of husband and wife and of parents and children preserves the health of the family.

It is better for those without understanding to be ruled than to rule. (Democritus, DK 75)

The children need to be ruled, especially when young.

Rule belongs by nature to the stronger [better]. (Democritus, DK 267)

The Greek word could be translated as stronger or better. These are not the same. But perhaps the closer a rule is by nature, the more these two are joined. If the better is stronger, the one who *should* rule is also *able* to rule. The family is closer to nature than the city. Hence, the parents are by nature stronger than the young children so that they can rule them as they should. So too the husband is stronger than the wife so that he is by nature the head of the family.

It is hard to be ruled by one's inferior. (Democritus, DK 49)

To be ruled by a woman is the ultimate outrage for a man.  
(Democritus, DK 111)

It is a great disorder in the family when the man is ruled by the woman. As Augustine says (*In Ioannem*, Tract. 2) *Quid enim peius est domo ubi femina habet imperium super virum?*

A woman is far sharper than a man in bad counsel [folly].  
(Democritus, DK 273)

A woman is more persuasive than a man. Hence, the danger of the defect in their thinking.

A woman must not practise argument: this is dreadful. (Democritus, DK 110)

A woman should be the heart of the family. Practising argument disturbs her place or role.

Speaking little is adornment for a woman. Simplicity of ornament is also beautiful. (Democritus, DK 274)

This is also the classical example of a woman's virtue in Sophocles (and Aristotle who quotes Sophocles) and in Shakespeare.

I do not think that one should have children. I observe in the possession of children many and great risks and also many griefs, a harvest is rare, and even then thin and weak. (Democritus, DK 276)

The rearing of children is perilous. One gains success full of anguish and care, failure means grief beyond all others. (Democritus, DK 275)

In these fragments, Democritus considers the reasons against having children. But since having children is the very end or purpose of marriage, it seems that one must take the risk.

Whoever needs to have children should, it seems to me, make them from his friends. He will thus obtain a child such as he wishes, for he can select the kind he wants. And the one that seems to be fit will be most apt to follow according to his nature. And this differs so much as that here it is possible to take the child out of many who is according to one's mind; but if one begets a child from himself, the risks are many; for it is necessary to accept whoever is generated. (Democritus, DK 277)

If one still insists upon having children despite the warning in the previous fragment, Democritus proposes here that one adopt rather than generate them. He seems to be making the having of children more a work of reason than of nature. He is starting in this respect to resemble some of our contemporaries.

For men, it is one of the necessities of life to have children, arising from nature and ancient institution. It is clear in the other animals too: they all have offspring by nature, not for the sake of any advantage. And when they are born, the parents work hard and bring up each as best they can and are very fearful for them while they are small; and if they suffer something, the parents are grieved. But for man it has now become an established custom that there should be also some enjoyment from the offspring. (Democritus, DK 278)

Democritus seems closer to the truth here when he recognizes the family as a work of nature and ancient institution rather than a work of reason.

One should not underestimate the difficulty of rearing children correctly. Nor should one be unprepared for the terrible things beyond our control that can happen to our children.

The moderation of the father is the greatest instruction for the children. (Democritus, DK 208)

Since the children learn more by imitation even than by words and moderation is so important in life, this is excellent advice. What terrible example is given by fathers who do not moderate their sensual desires and anger.

If children are allowed not to work, they will learn neither letters nor music nor gymnastic, nor what is especially virtue, to feel shame. For shame especially is apt to come from these. (Democritus, DK 179)

There are many reasons why children must be taught to work hard when young. Without a sense of shame, the child cannot become good.

Idleness is the worst of all to teach youth; for this is what breeds those pleasures from which badness comes. (Democritus, DK 178)

Some of us can still remember hearing our teachers say that *An idle mind is the devil's workshop*.

It is possible without spending much of one's own money to educate one's children, and to throw around their property and their persons a wall and a safeguard. (Democritus, DK 280)

The excessive accumulation of wealth for one's children is an excuse for covetousness, which thus displays its own way. (Democritus, DK 222)

Many fathers exaggerate the amount of money necessary for good family life and even to educate their children. They mistake the role of material goods in enabling us to live well. This is due to not knowing what it is *to live well*

One should, as far as possible, divide out one's property among one's children, at the same time watching over them to see that they do nothing ruinous when they have it in their hands. At the same time, they thus become much more thrifty over money, and more eager to acquire it and compete with one another. Payments made in a communal establishment do not irk so much as those in a private one, nor does the income please but much less. (Democritus, DK 279)

Nevertheless, children must be taught, as it is said, the value of money so as not to waste it.

The man who is fortunate in a son-in-law finds a son; the man unfortunate, loses his daughter also. (Democritus, DK 272)

This is an important observation for men who have daughters to keep in mind.

Use slaves as parts of the body: each to his own function. (Democritus, DK 270)

Slaves were a normal part of a Greek household. This is good advice and was observed by our prudent forefathers.

## POLITICAL FRAGMENTS

Learn the political art which is the greatest, and pursue its toils, from which great and brilliant things come to be for men. (Democritus, DK 157)

The political art is the greatest in that it aims at the common good of the city or nation. This is the greatest human good. But the political art or political foresight has its end, not to know, but to act and this is with toil. But where it leads one to act well, “great and brilliant things” can be achieved for the city or nation.

One must hold that what concerns the city is the greatest matter among the rest; how it may be well run; neither pursuing disputes contrary to right, nor giving a power to oneself contrary to the common good. The well-run city is the greatest direction, and in this all things are contained; when this is saved, all is saved; when this is destroyed, all is destroyed. (Democritus, DK 252)

The city or nation contains all the goods necessary for living well. But the city or nation should be ruled for the sake of the common good, the good of the whole. If the city or nation is directed to the good of one part, it is unjust. Since the city or nation contains all the good things that are necessary to live well, in its safety or destruction all our goods are bound up.

Communal distress is harder than that of individuals; for there remains no hope of aid. (Democritus, DK 287)

If one part or member of the city is in trouble, the other parts can come to its aid. But if the whole city is in trouble, all would seem to be lost for there is nothing outside of it to fall back on.

The greatest deeds and wars between cities are achieved by means of oneness of mind: there is no other way. (Democritus, DK 250)

Oneness of mind in the citizens is something that the political art must especially aim at for nothing great in peace or war can be accomplished by a city without this.

When the powerful undertake to give to those not having, and to help them, and show kindness to them, herein at last is pity, and not being alone, and becoming companions [friends], and aiding one another, and oneness of mind among citizens; and other goods things such as no man could recount. (Democritus, DK 255)

Those who have more must consider and help those who have less, using their power and goods as if they were entrusted to them not only for their own private good, but also for the good of the whole. When they are so disposed, one cannot begin to enumerate all the good things which come to the city.

In a shared [common] fish, there are no bones. (Democritus, DK 151)

Perhaps this touches upon some Greek proverb about friendship among men when material goods are shared.

All love of strife is without understanding; for in considering the harm of one's enemy, one does not see what is useful to oneself. (Democritus, DK 237)

Civil war is bad to both parties; for there is like destruction both to the conquerors and the conquered. (Democritus, DK 249)

All love of strife or war is unreasonable for in harming another one does not see how one is harming oneself. But civil war is especially destructive of both parties.

The laws would not prevent each man from living according to his own authority, if one individual did not harm another; for ill-will makes the beginning of strife. (Democritus, DK 245)

The law wishes to benefit the life of men; and it is able to do so, when they themselves wish to undergo it well; for it shows to those persuaded to obey it, their own virtue. (Democritus, DK 248)

Law is not just to coerce the bad, but also to help those who are persuaded by it to become better men. This is, of course, much more true of something like the Rule of St. Benedict than of the law of the city.

It is necessary to punish wrongdoers so far as possible, and not neglect it. To do such is just and good, but to not do so is unjust and bad. (Democritus, DK 261)

Those who do what is deserving of exile or imprisonment or are worthy of some other punishment, must be condemned and not let off. Whoever contrary to the law acquits a man, judging according to profit or pleasure, does wrong, and this is bound to be on his heart [conscience]. (Democritus, DK 262)

The punishment of wrongdoers is a matter of justice and not to do so is unjust. It is not revenge or hatred of others.

One must kill all those harming contrary to justice. The man who does this has the greater share of cheerfulness and justice and courage and shares a greater part of property in every ordered society. (Democritus, DK 258)

With animals, the rule for killing them and not killing is thus: any that do wrong and wish to do so may be killed with impunity, and it conduces to well-being to do so rather than not. (Democritus, DK 257)

Just as has been written regarding beasts and snakes which are hostile (*to man*), so it seems to me it is necessary to do with regard to human beings: one should, according to the laws of our fathers, kill an enemy of the city in every ordered society, in which a law does not forbid it. But there are prohibitions in every State: sacred customs and treaties and oaths. (Democritus, DK 259)

The one killing a highway robber and plunderer shall be exempt from penalty, whether he does it by his own hand, or by urging, or by vote. (Democritus, DK 260)

The punishment of wrongdoers should include the death penalty for certain crimes. The comparison to animals that should be killed is perhaps not only a proportion or likeness. The killing of a human being can be justified only when that man has made himself less than a man by his crime.

There is no way under the present constitution by which magistrates can be prevented from wrongdoing, even if they are altogether good. For it is not likely for anyone else than for oneself, that he will become the same in different circumstances. Whence it is necessary that such things be ordered so that the one doing no wrong, and convicting wrong-doers, shall not fall under the power of the latter; rather, something, a law or some other means, must defend the one doing what is just. (Democritus, DK 266)

Democritus could be speaking here of the age-old problem that those who administer the law may disobey it. Or he may have in mind that in enforcing the law, they may make mistakes. Those who enforce the law must be protected from wrongdoers.

To good men, it is not advantageous that, neglecting their own affairs, they do other things; for their private affairs suffer. But if a man neglects public affairs, he becomes ill spoken of, even if he steals nothing and does no wrong. And if he is not negligent and does wrong, he is liable not only to be ill-spoken of but also to suffer something. To make mistakes is inevitable, but it is not easy for men to forgive. (Democritus, DK 253)

There are problems in not engaging in public affairs and in so doing.

Men remember mistakes more than things done well. This is just; for as the one who returning deposit does not deserve praise, but the one not returning is ill-spoken of and suffers whereas those who do not do so deserve blame and punishment, so with the ruler: he was elected not to make mistakes but to do things well. (Democritus, DK 265)

Men are criticized more for their mistakes in office than they are praised for doing well. This is in some way reasonable.

It is necessary to be on one's guard against the bad man, lest he seize his opportunity. (Democritus, DK 87)

When the bad enter upon office, the more unworthy they are, the more they become careless, and are filled with folly and rashness. (Democritus, DK 254)

One must on his guard against the bad and especially when they gain office.

He has the greatest share of justice and virtue who awards the greatest offices to the most deserving. (Democritus, DK 263)

Because of the above dangers, the worthy or correct distribution of offices is a great work.

Rule belongs by nature to the stronger [better]. (Democritus, DK 267)

It is hard to be ruled by an inferior. (Democritus, DK 49)

The Greek word here (*kresswn*), as has been said before in the domestic fragments, can be translated as stronger or better. The latter meaning seems more reasonable, but that there are those with whom Socrates discusses in the dialogues who seem to maintain this statement in the former sense.

The man measuring himself against the stronger [better] ends in disgrace. (Democritus, DK 238)

There is much truth in this as can be seen in history.

Poverty in democracy is as much to be preferred to so-called prosperity under an oligarchy of a few powerful families, as freedom to slavery. (Democritus, DK 251)

Democracy is better than oligarchy and especially better than a narrow oligarchy.

Freedom of speech is characteristic of freedom; but the danger is in discerning the right occasion. (Democritus, DK 226)

We are still wrestling with the danger involved in freedom of speech and the abuse of it.

Duane H. Berquist