Pythagoreanism: Pythagorean Sentences from the Protreptics of Iamblichus

1. As we live through soul, it must be said that by the virtue of this we live well; just as because we see through the eyes, we see well through the virtue of these.

2. It must not be thought that gold can be injured by rust, or virtue by baseness.

3. We should betake ourselves to virtue as to an inviolable temple, in order that we may not be exposed to any ignoble insolence of soul with respect to our communion with, and continuance in life.

4. We should confide in virtue as in a chaste wife; but trust to fortune as to an inconstant mistress.

5. It is better that virtue should be received accompanied with poverty, than wealth with violence; and frugality with health, than voracity with disease.

6. An abundance of nutriment is noxious to the body; but the body is preserved when the soul is disposed in a becoming manner.

7. It is equally dangerous to give a sword to a madman, and power to a depraved man.

8. As it is better for a part of the body which contains purulent matter to be burnt, than to continue in the state in which it is, thus also it is better for a depraved man to die than to live.

9. The theorems of philosophy are to be enjoyed as much as possible, as if they were ambrosia and nectar. For the pleasure arising from them is genuine, incorruptible, and divine. They are also capable of producing magnanimity; and though they cannot make us eternal beings, yet they enable us to obtain a scientific knowledge of eternal natures.

10. If vigour of sensation is considered by us to be an eligible thing, we should much more strenuously endeavour to obtain prudence; for it is as it were the sensitive vigour of the practical intellect which we contain. And as through the former we are not deceived in sensible perceptions, so through the latter we avoid false reasoning in practical affairs.

11. We shall venerate Divinity in a proper manner if we render the intellect that is in us pure from all vice, as from a certain stain.

12. A temple, indeed, should be adorned with gifts, but the soul with disciplines.

13. As the lesser mysteries are to be delivered before the greater, thus also discipline must precede philosophy.

14. The fruits of the earth, indeed, are annually imparted, but the fruits of philosophy at every part of the year.

15. As land is especially to be attended to by him who wishes toe obtain from it the most excellent fruit, thus also the greatest attention should be: paid to the soul, in order that it may produce fruit worthy of its nature.