Pythagoreanism: The Golden Sentences of Democrates

1. If anyone will give his mind to these sentences, he will obtain many things worthy of a man, and be free from many things that are base.

2. The perfection of the soul will correct the depravity of the body; but the strength of the body without reasoning does not render the soul better.

3. He who loves the goods of the soul will love things more, divine; but he who loves the goods of its transient habitation will love things human.

4. It is beautiful to impede an unjust man; but, if this be not possible, it is beautiful not to act in conjunction with him.

5. It is necessary to be good, rather than to appear so.

6. The felicity of a man does not consist either in body or in riches, but in upright conduct and justice.

7. Sin should be abstained from, not through fear, but for the sake of the becoming.

8. It is a great thing to be wise where we ought in calamitous circumstances.

9. Repentance after base actions is the salvation of life.

10. It is necessary to be a speaker of the truth, and not to be loquacious.

11. He who does an injury is more unhappy than he who receives one.

12. It is the province of a magnanimous man to bear with mildness the errors of others.

13. It is comely not to oppose the law, nor a prince, nor one wiser than yourself.

14. A good man pays no attention to the reproofs of the depraved.

15. It is hard to be governed by these who are worse than ourselves.

16. He who is perfectly vanquished by riches, can never be just.

17. Reason is frequently more persuasive than gold itself.

18. He who admonishes a man that fancies he has intellect, labours in vain.

19. Many who have not learnt to argue rationally, still live according to reason.

20. Many who commit the basest actions often exercise the best discourse.

21. Fools frequently become wise under the pressure of misfortunes.

22. It is necessary to emulate the works and actions, and not the words of virtue.

23. Those who are naturally well disposed, know things beautiful, and are themselves emulous of them.

24. Vigour and strength of body are the nobility of cattle; but the rectitude of manners is the nobility of man.

25. Neither art nor wisdom can be acquired without preparatory learning.

26. It is better to reprove your own errors, than those of others.

27. Those whose manners are well ordered will also be orderly in their lives.

28. It is good not only to refrain from doing an injury, but even from the very wish.

29. It is proper to speak well of good works; for to do so of such as are base is the property of a fraudulent man and an impostor.

30, Many that have great learning have no intellect.

31. It is necessary to endeavour to obtain an abundance of intellect, and not pursue an abundance of erudition.

32. It is better that counsel should precede actions, than that repentance should follow them.

33. Put not confidence in all men, but in those that are worthy; for to do the former is the province of a stupid man, but the latter of a wise man.

34. A worthy and an unworthy man are to be judged not from their actions only, but also from their will.

35. To desire immoderately is the province of a boy, and not of a man.

36. Unseasonable pleasures bring forth pains.

37. Vehement desires about any one thing render the soul blind with respect to other things.

38. The love is just which, unattended with injury, aspires after things becoming.

39. Admit nothing as pleasant which is not advantageous.

40. It is better to be governed by, than to govern, the stupid.

41. Not argument but calamity is the preceptor to children.

42. Glory and wealth without wisdom are not secure possessions.

43. It is not indeed useless to procure wealth, but to procure it from injustice is the most pernicious of all things.

44. It is a dreadful thing to imitate the bad, and to be unwilling to imitate the good.

45. It is a shameful thing for a man to be employed about the affairs of others, but to be ignorant of his own.

46. To be always intending to act renders action imperfect.

47. Fraudulent men, and such as are only seemingly good, do all things in words and nothing in deeds.

48, He is a blessed man who has both property and intellect, for he will use them well in such things as are proper.

49. The ignorance of what is excellent is the cause of error.

50. Prior to the performance of base things, a man should reverence himself.

51. A man given to contradiction, and very attentive to trifles, is naturally unadapted to learn what is proper.

52. Continually to speak without being willing to hear, is arrogance.

53. It is necessary to guard against a depraved man, lest he should take advantage of opportunity.

54. An envious man is the cause of molestation to himself, as to an enemy.

55. Not only he is an enemy who acts unjustly, but even he who deliberates about so acting.

56. The enmity of relations is far more bitter than that of strangers.

57. Conduct yourself to all men without suspicion; and be accommodating and cautious in your behaviour.

58. It is proper to receive favours, at the same time determining that the retribution shall surpass the gift.

59. When about to bestow a favour, previously consider him who is to receive it, lest being a fraudulent character he should return evil for good.

60. Small favours seasonably bestowed, become things of the greatest consequence to those who receive them.

61. Honours with wise men are capable of effecting the greatest things, if at the same time they understand that they are honoured.

62. The beneficent man is one who does not look to retribution, but who deliberately intends to do well.

63. Many that appear to be friends are not, and others, who do not appear to be friends, are so.

64. The friendship of one wise man is better than that of every fool,

65. He is unworthy to live who has not one worthy friend.

66. Many turn from their friends, if, from affluence, they fall into adversity.

67. The equal is beautiful in everything; but excess and defect to me do not appear to be so.

68. He who loves no one does not appear to me to be loved by any one.

69. He is an agreeable old man who is facetious, and abounds in interesting anecdote.

70. The beauty of the body is merely animal unless supported by intellect.

71. To find a friend in prosperity, is very easy; but in adversity, it is the most difficult of all things.

72. Not all relations are friends, but those who accord with what is mutually advantageous.

73. Since we are men, it is becoming, not to deride, but bewail, the calamities of men.

74. Good scarcely presents itself, even to those who investigate it; but evil is obvious without investigation.

75. Men who delight to blame others are not naturally adapted to friendship.

76. A woman should not be given to loquacity; for it is a dreadful thing.

77. To be governed by a woman is the extremity of insolence and unmanliness.

78. It is the property of a divine intellect to be always intently thinking about the beautiful.

79. He who believes that Divinity beholds all things, will not sin either secretly or openly.

80. Those who praise the unwise do them a great injury.

81. It is better to be praised by another than by oneself.

82. If you cannot reconcile to yourself the praises you receive, think that you are flattered.

83. The world is a scene; life is a transition. You came, you saw, you departed.

84. The world is a mutation: life a vain opinion.