

Maximes Capitales - traduction anglaise

Auteur(s) : Epicure

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Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines* (*Kuriai Doxai*) = D. L. X, 139-154

D.L. X, 139

KD I What is blessed and incorruptible has no dealings with itself or others, so that it suffers neither anger nor gratitude; for all such things are of weakness. *Scholion* : He says elsewhere that the gods are observable by reason, the ones presenting themselves according to the unity, the others according to the resemblance, because of the continuous emanation of similar simulacra which lead to the same < representation >, and they have human form.

KD II Death is nothing to us; for what is disintegrated is insensible; and what is insensible is nothing to us.

KD III The limit of the measure of pleasure is the elimination of all pain. Where pleasure is, while it lasts, there is neither pain nor sorrow nor both.

D.L. X, 140

KD IV The pain does not last continuously in the flesh, but its maximum lasts a minimum time, and when its intensity exceeds a little that of the pleasure it affects the flesh only a few days. And for those illnesses that are chronic, they are experienced with an overabundant pleasure in the flesh compared to the pain.

KD V It is not possible to live pleasantly without living wisely, well and with justice, < nor wisely, well and with justice > without living pleasantly. He who lacks that by which one lives wisely, well and with justice, has no means of living pleasantly.

D.L. X, 141

KD VI To live serenely in the midst of men, power and royalty are natural goods, if they are indeed likely to render us this service.

KD VII Some have wanted to become famous and eager, thinking that this would build for them security among men. So that if the life of these individuals is well secured, they have acquired a natural good; but if it is not, they do not have what they have planned for from the beginning, according to what is proper to them by nature.

KD VIII No pleasure is in itself bad; but that which produces certain pleasures multiplies the worries much more than the pleasures.

D.L. X, 142

KD IX If all pleasures were condensed in place and time, and held either in the totality of the aggregate or in the essential parts of a nature, the pleasures would never differ from each other.

KD X If that which produces the pleasures sought by the libertines were to free the mind from fears about heavenly phenomena, death, and suffering, and were also to teach the limit of desires, we would have no reason to blame them, who are in every way filled with pleasures and who endure neither suffering nor sorrow, which is precisely what is evil.

KD XI If the hypotheses about the stars or about death, for example that the latter would be something for us, did not trouble us, nor the ignorance of the limits of sufferings and desires, we would not need the science of nature.

D.L. X, 143

KD XII It is not possible to free oneself from fear concerning the most fundamental realities without having knowledge of the whole, but by making assumptions about what is of the mythical realm; so that it is not possible without the science of nature to enjoy pure pleasures.

KD XIII It is not at all useful to obtain security with regard to men by keeping hypotheses with regard to things above, things below ground, and in general to things in the infinite.

KD XIV As for security among men, it comes in part from strong power and wealth, but the purest security comes from quietness and retirement from the crowd.

D.L. X, 144

KD XV Natural wealth is limited and easy to access; wealth according to empty opinions sinks into illimit.

KD XVI Fortune has little effect on the wise man, but reasoning has arbitrated the greatest and most fundamental realities and, in the continuous course of life, arbitrates them and will arbitrate them.

KD XVII That which is just is absolutely untroubled, that which is unjust is full of extreme trouble.

KD XVIII Pleasure in the flesh does not increase once the pain of need has been removed, but only varies. The limit of thought in regard to pleasure arises from the apprehension of those very things and those related to them, which create by thought the greatest terrors.

D.L. X, 145

KD XIX Unlimited time and limited time contain equal pleasure, if their limits are measured by reasoning.

KD XX The flesh itself makes the limits of pleasure unlimited, and an unlimited time gives it. Thought reasoning empirically about the end and limit of the flesh, and having freed oneself from the terror of eternity, gives the most complete life, and there is no need for unlimited time either : therefore, one does not flee from pleasure, and when one has reached the last threshold of life, one does not die regretting anything of the best life.

D.L. X, 146

KD XXI He who knows the limits of life knows that it is easy to obtain what removes the pain of need and what makes life complete : so that among the realities, those which imply competition are useless.

KD XXII We must reason empirically concerning the end we have set and all the evidence to which we relate our opinions ; otherwise, everything will be full of confusion and trouble.

KD XXIII If you fight against all sensations, you will have nothing from which to make a comparison in order to discern those which you say are deceptive.

D.L. X, 147

KD XXIV If you reject a sensation completely and make no distinction between what is the object of opinion, what awaits confirmation, what is already present in the sensation, the affects, and every imaginative apprehension of thought, you will confuse the remaining sensations with the empty opinion, so that you will reject any criterion. If you maintain with the same firmness all that awaits confirmation, in the notions that are the object of opinion, and what is not confirmed, you will not remove the error, since you will have kept intact all the ambiguity for any judgment on what is correct and what is not.

D.L. X, 148

KD XXV If you do not refer each of your actions to the end of nature on every occasion, but depart from it by choosing or rejecting for some other reason, your actions will not be consistent with your words.

KD XXVI Among desires, those whose non-fulfilment does not lead to suffering are not natural, but they have a volatile impulse, when they are considered difficult to reach or likely to cause harm.

KD XXVII Of the things which wisdom provides for the greater happiness of the whole life, the possession of friendship is by far the most important.

KD XXVIII The same knowledge which makes us confidently maintain that nothing that is eternal or endures in time is terrible, shows us that, in limited realities, security is best achieved through friendship.

D.L. X, 149

KD XXIX Among desires, there are those which are natural and necessary, those which are natural and not necessary, those which are neither natural nor necessary but which come from an empty opinion.

KD XXX Among the desires which are natural but do not cause pain if they are not satisfied, those which are accompanied by a sense of urgency come from an empty opinion and they are not appeased not because of their own nature but because of this empty opinion of man. *Scholion : For Epicurus, natural and necessary are those that suppress suffering, such as drinking when thirsty; natural and not necessary are those that vary only pleasures but do not suppress suffering, such as rich foods; neither natural nor necessary are crowns and erecting statues.*

D.L. X, 150

KD XXXI What is just by nature is that which allows us to identify what is useful in order not to harm each other or to suffer harm.

KD XXXII There is nothing just or unjust about those among living beings who cannot make pacts not to harm each other or to be harmed; nor is there anything just or unjust about those among peoples who cannot or will not make pacts not to harm each other or to be harmed.

KD XXXIII There is no justice in itself, but there are always pacts between people, in places of all sizes, not to harm each other or to be harmed.

D.L. X, 151

KD XXXIV Injustice is not an evil in itself, but it is the fear based on the suspicion of not escaping those who have been charged with punishing these unjust acts that makes it an evil.

KD XXXV There is no example of a person who hides himself from committing one of those acts which we have agreed to refrain from in order not to harm or be harmed, and is certain that he will remain unpunished, even though he has escaped a thousand times so far. Until his disintegration there is no evidence that he will remain unpunished.

KD XXXVI Taking into account what is common to all, what is just is the same; for this is what has proved useful in the community of men among themselves; but taking into account what is peculiar to a region and depending on the quantities of causes that may occur at any time, the same < notion of > just does not follow for all.

D.L. X, 152

KD XXXVII What is confirmed as useful in the customs of the community of men among themselves, among the acts which the laws say are just, occupies the place of what is just, whether or not it is the same for all. And if someone enacts a law which does not result in anything useful in the mutual community, < this law > will no longer have the nature of what is just. And if what is useful becomes opposed to what is just, it takes a moment to adapt itself to the prenotation, it is no less just during this moment for those who do not allow themselves to be troubled by empty sounds, but who attach their gaze solely to realities.

D.L. X, 153

KD XXXVIII If nothing new has happened in the general state of affairs, then, if what the law says is just does not visibly fit in with the preconceived notion < of what is just > for the same actions, then it is not just. And in the case where something new has occurred, if what has been determined to be just is no longer useful, then it was just as long as it was useful to the mutual community of fellow citizens; and it was no longer just when it was no longer useful.

D.L. X, 154

KD XXXIX He who has best guarded against distrust of the outside world is the one who brings into his kinship those for whom it is possible, and who does not make hostile to those for whom it is impossible; he avoids all sociability when it is impossible, and he distances himself when it is useful to do so.

KD XL Those who were able to build up for themselves an extreme confidence in their relatives were able to live the most pleasant existence with each other, having the strongest confidence, and receiving in return the fullest familiarity; they did not mourn, as if out of pity, the death of one who had finished living.