

The *Anonymus Iamblichi*

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Fragment 1 = 95.13-24 Pistelli

[1] Whatever someone wants to achieve completely and best, whether it be manliness, whether it be eloquence, whether it be wisdom, whether it be goodness, either the whole or some part of it, it is possible to work toward it on the basis of these things. [2] First, it is necessary to have natural ability, and this is given by chance. But at that point the following things are in the power of the man himself: to become a desirer of fine and good things, willing to labor, learning them as early as possible and for a long time and bringing them to completion.

[3] And if any one of these things is absent, it is not possible to achieve it completely and to the highest degree. But if he possesses all of these things, whatever any man practices, this becomes unsurpassable.

Fragment 2 = 96.1-97.16 Pistelli

[1] In whatever one wants to acquire a reputation among men and to appear as one is, one must start at once when one is young and always apply oneself to it consistently, not variously at one time and another. [2] For when any of these things has persisted with him, having been initiated immediately and having grown to completion with him, he acquires a firm reputation and fame, for these reasons: because he is trusted unequivocally and because the envy of men does not attach to him, envy due to which men do not praise certain things or express reasonable opinions about them, and speak falsely about other things, criticizing them unjustly.

[3] For it is not pleasant for men to honor someone else; for they think that they themselves are being deprived of something. But if necessity itself has compelled them and led them to it gradually over a long time, they come to praise him, even if still unwillingly. [4] And at the same time, they cease to doubt whether the man is as he appears or whether he is setting a trap and using deception to hunt for a reputation and that what he does is intended to seem admirable, while he misleads men.

And it is in that way, which I spoke of before, that goodness, being practiced, engenders trust for itself and acclaim. [5] For at the point when men have been forcefully won over, they are no longer capable of experiencing envy, nor do they continue to think they are being deceived.

[6] And furthermore, when the time spent on each task and activity is long, the length fortifies what is being practiced, whereas a short time cannot accomplish this.

[7] And in the case of skill, if someone has learned and been taught one that is based on words, he may become no worse than his teacher in a short time. But goodness is the very thing that is composed of many actions, and this it is neither possible to begin late nor to bring to completion quickly. Rather, one must be reared with it and grow with it, avoiding bad speech and habits, and pursuing and working at good ones over a long time and with care.

[8] And at the same time, the following sort of harm attaches to a good reputation that one has acquired in a short time: men are not pleased to accept those who suddenly and in a short time have become wealthy or wise or good or manly.

Fragment 3 = 97.16-98.11 Pistelli

[1] Whenever someone, having desired something and worked at it, possesses it completely, whether it is eloquence, whether it is wisdom, whether it is strength, he should make use of this for good and lawful purposes. But if someone uses the good that now exists for unjust and unlawful purposes, such a thing is worst of all, and it is better that it be absent than present. [2] And just as he who possesses one of these things becomes completely good when he make use of them for good purposes, so in turn he who uses them for base purposes becomes completely and utterly bad.

[3] And again, in the case of one who is desirous of goodness as a whole, we must also inquire from what speech or action he may become best. Such would be one who was beneficial to the most men.

[4] Now, if someone does a good thing to his neighbors by giving them money, he will be compelled to be bad when in turn he collects the money from them. And then, he could not accumulate such a bounty that if he were giving and donating his money, he would not run out. Consequently, the following second bad thing also occurs after the accumulation of money: that one who was rich may become poor and one who had possessions may come to have nothing.

[5] How then may someone, not by distributing money but in some other way, still be a benefactor to men, and do these things not with badness but with goodness? And furthermore, how if he will donate would he maintain his giving without stopping? [6] Now this will occur in the following way: if he supports the laws and what is just. For this is what holds cities and men together and enables communal life.

Fragment 4 = 98.17-99.15 Pistelli

[1] And furthermore, it is necessary for every man to be especially and utterly self-controlled. And someone would be so above all if he was superior to money, which tends to corrupt everyone, and, if, unsparing of his soul, he was earnestly

committed to what is just and engaged in the pursuit of goodness. For it is with respect to these two things that most people lack power.

[2] And they suffer from these things for the following sort of reason. On the one hand, they are attached to their soul, because this is their life, their soul. And so, they cherish this and hold it dear, through their love of their life and through the habits with which they are raised.

And on the other hand, they are attached to money owing to the following things that tend to cause them fear. [3] And what are these things? Illnesses, old age, sudden losses – I don't mean losses resulting from legal matters; for it is possible to guard and protect oneself against these; I mean the following sorts of things: fires, the death of family members and animals, and besides these, other misfortunes, that surround their bodies, others their souls, and others their money.

[4] And so, because of all these things, in order that they are able to use their money for these things, each man is desirous of wealth. [5] And there are also other things no less than those just mentioned that tend to impel men to money-making: ambitious rivalries among one another and jealousies and positions of political power, on account of which they regard money highly, because it contributes to such things.

[6] But whoever is a truly good man, he does not hunt for a reputation by means of an alien adornment that surrounds him, but by means of his own goodness.

Fragment 5 = 99.19-28 Pistelli

[1] If it were given to a man – unless he were killed by another – to be both ageless and deathless for the rest of time, one could well forgive him for being sparing of his life. [2] But since what is given to a life that is prolonged is old age, which is worse for men, and not to be deathless, it is then both great stupidity and habituation to base reasons and objects of desire to preserve this in exchange for a bad reputation, and not to leave in its place a deathless thing, and instead of a fame that is mortal, an everlasting and always living fame.

Fragment 6 = 100.5-101.6 Pistelli

[1] One should not strive to have more than one's share, nor believe that power based on having more than one's share is goodness and that obeying the laws is cowardice; for this idea is most base, and from it everything that is contrary to what is good comes into being, both badness and harm. For if the nature of men has made them unable to live alone, and they have come together with one another, yielding to necessity, and they have discovered the whole of life and the instruments for it, and it is not possible for them to be with one another and to live in a state of lawlessness – for as such they would suffer greater loss than by living alone – then, because of

these necessities, both law and what is just rule over men and in no way would they be displaced. For these things have bound themselves onto men by a strong nature.

[2] And if in fact there were someone, who from the beginning had the following sort of nature: unharmable in his flesh, both immune to sickness and suffering, both preternatural and adamantine in both his body and his soul, one might perhaps think that for such a man power based on his having more than his share would endure; for such a man, although not submitting to the law, would be able to go unpunished.

Yet one who holds this opinion is not correct. [3] For even if there were such a man (as would not exist), by allying himself with the laws and with what is just and fortifying these and using his strength both for them and for those things that support them, in this way would such a man secure himself; and otherwise he would not remain in position. [4] For I think that collectively men would take a stand as enemies of a man of such a nature through their respect for law; and their multitude either through skill or through force would overcome and prevail over such a man.

[5] In this way it appears that even power itself, the very thing that in fact is power, is preserved because of law and through justice.

Fragment 7 = 101.11-104.14 Pistelli

[1] Trust is the first thing that comes into being as a result of lawfulness; and it benefits all men greatly, and this is one of the great goods. For as a result of it money is shared; and so, even if there is little money, it suffices since it circulates; but without this, even if there is a lot of money it does not suffice.

[2] And chance events relating to money and to life, some being good and some not, as a result of lawfulness these are managed most advantageously for men. For those who have good fortune use it with security and without others plotting against them, while those who have bad fortune are supported by those who have good fortune on account of their intercourse and trust, the very things that come into being from lawfulness.

[3] Furthermore, due to lawfulness, men's time is not occupied with political affairs, and can be spent on the personal activities of their life. [4] And in a state of lawfulness men are released from the most unpleasant thoughts, and they have the most pleasant ones. For thoughts of political affairs are least pleasant, and thoughts of personal activities are most pleasant.

[5] Furthermore, when men go to sleep, which is precisely a respite from bad things, they do so with considerations that are free of anxiety and trouble; and when they wake, they experience other such things, and they are not suddenly made fearful and from a most pleasant change of ... do not expect the day to be ...¹ Rather, they

¹ The text is corrupt. But the sense is presumably that after a pleasant respite of sleep they do not face the day with anxiety.

pleasantly think untroubled thoughts about their personal activities and lighten their labors by thinking instead of good things with confident and optimistic hopes, for all of which lawfulness is responsible.

[6] And that which brings the greatest bad things to men, war, leading to ruin and enslavement, this also affects those who are lawless more, and those who are lawful less.

[7] And many other good things exist in a state of lawfulness, the very sort of things that are aids to life and a consolation for the difficulties that come from it.

But from lawlessness the following bad things result. [8] First, men lack leisure for their personal activities and they are preoccupied with what is least pleasant, political affairs, and not personal activities; and they hoard their money because of a lack of trust and a lack of intercourse, and they do not share it; and so money becomes scarce, even if there is a lot of it.

[9] And chance events, both those that are harmful and those that are good, serve contrary ends. For good fortune is not secure in a state of lawlessness; rather, it becomes a target of plots; while bad fortune is not forced back, but strengthened due to a lack of trust and a lack of intercourse. [10] And foreign war is introduced more and internal strife from the same cause; and even if it did not exist before, it happens then. And it happens that men are always engaged in political affairs owing to plots engendered by one another, due to which they are constantly on guard and counter-plotting against one another.

[11] And when they are awake, they do not have pleasant thoughts, nor when they go off to sleep is their expectation pleasant, but frightening; and their awakening is fearful and terrifying and induces in a man sudden memories of bad things. These are the very things that come from lawlessness, and all the other bad things previously mentioned result from it.

[12] And also tyranny, a bad thing of such magnitude and of such a kind, also comes into being from nothing other than lawlessness. Yet some men, those who do not reckon correctly, think that a tyrant acquires his position for some other reason and that men are deprived of their freedom not because they themselves are responsible for it, but because they have been forced by a tyrant who has acquired his position.

They do not reason about these things correctly. [13] For whoever thinks that a king or tyrant comes into being because of something other than lawlessness and having more than one's share is stupid. For when everyone turns to badness, it is then that this occurs. For it is not possible for men to live without laws and justice.

[14] Therefore, whenever these two things, law and justice, are lacking from the multitude, then at that point government over them and protection of them goes over to one man.

How else would monarchy come about for one man, unless law which benefits the multitude were expelled? [15] For it is necessary for this man, who destroys justice

and eliminates law which shared by and beneficial to all, to be adamantine if he intends to seize these things from the multitude of men, when he is one and they are many. [16] But being made of flesh and similar to the rest of men, he would not be able to do these things.

On the contrary, it is if law and justice have been abandoned that he would acquire his position and rule as a monarch. For this reason some men fail to see even this coming into being.