

DIOGENES

a socratic dialog

- Socrates: Well, well, the old cur himself. What could drag you out of your comfortable bath tub to come see me?
- Diogenes: I heard a story about you; came to hear it from the horse's mouth.
- Socrates: Um.
- Diogenes: I hear tell you'd rather suffer injustice than do it.
- Socrates: I'd rather neither.
- Diogenes: But supposing there was no other choice, which would it be?
- Socrates: The former.
- Diogenes: Even to the extent of not defending yourself against injustice?
- Socrates: If it would mean harming another, I would not do it.
- Diogenes: How so?
- Socrates: Because to do injustice is to sicken and blacken one's soul, but to suffer injustice is merely inconvenient to the body.
- Diogenes: A little bodily inconvenience does no harm to the soul?
- Socrates: You, of all sages, come to ask me that?
- Diogenes: But how could anyone want to suffer injustice?
- Socrates: How could anyone want to *do* injustice? Once you realize that doing injustice makes you base, you cannot want to do it. But to suffer injustice does not make you base, so it is preferable if there is no alternative.
- Diogenes: Then how do you explain the fact that so many people do bad things willingly.
- Socrates: Only *apparently* willingly. They are ignorant of the true nature of what they do. If they knew, they wouldn't do it. And if you do something without knowing it, it isn't willful and therefore not bad either.

[WHACK -- Diogenes cracks Socrates across the forehead with his staff.]

- Socrates: [*stunned*] Egad, man! What are you at??

Diogenes: Testing a theory.

[Diogenes cracks Socrates again harder; Socrates staggers.]

Diogenes: Did that hurt?

Socrates: AougG!

Diogenes: Ah, good.

[Diogenes cracks him a third time; Socrates cowers as from a maniac, wrapping his arms around his head to ward off further blows.]

Socrates: Are you mad?! What is this??

Diogenes: Merely a little inconvenience to the body. I haven't touched your soul yet, have I?

Socrates: Help! Mad dog! Mad dog!

[Dazed, with blood running into his eyes, Socrates cannot see which way to turn to get away.]

Diogenes: Not quick enough with your answer.

[Diogenes cracks him across the ribs; Socrates doubles over.]

Diogenes: No real harm done, I trust? I haven't blackened your soul, have I, even just a tiny bit? No? Good, then mine neither.

[Diogenes jabs Socrates in the kidney with his staff; Socrates collapses into a heap.]

Diogenes: Or, at any rate, unless I *know* I'm making you base, ...

[Diogenes kicks him in the stomach.]

Diogenes: I'm only acting in ignorance, ...

[Kick.]

Diogenes: and therefore, ...

[Kick.]

Diogenes: involuntarily.

[Socrates sputtering and moaning throughout.]

Diogenes: Now, about punishment--I hear you think it ... restorative. Balm for a sick soul. Is that ... approximately ... your view?

[Diogenes brandishes the staff about Socrates's shins.]

Diogenes: Quick, man! Think quick!

Socrates: YES, YES! [*gasp*] Correction, purgative, [*cough*] bitter medicine--

Diogenes: Then wouldn't agree that an obol of prevention is worth a drachma of cure?

Socrates: Of course. [*realizing too late*] NO, NO!

[Diogenes kicks him in the groin.]

Diogenes: There, that ought to keep you in the pink.

[Socrates whimpers a protest.]

Diogenes: My dear chap, if no one becomes bad from his own desire and volition, what's the point of punishment after the fact?

Socrates: [*voice croaking*] It wouldn't be fair before the fact.

Diogenes: No one accuses the doctor of being unfair because setting a broken bone hurts, now does he?

[Polo swing to the kneecap...]

Diogenes: There, there. What's a bit of bodily inconvenience between philosophers?

[...to the other kneecap.]

Diogenes: So, I've reminded of something you'd temporarily forgotten, purged you of some silly Ideas.

[Diogenes kicks him in the groin again.]

Socrates: [*vomits*]

Diogenes: Couldn't keep your medicine down, eh? Better see a doctor about it.

[Exit Diogenes.]

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