

THE ATTIC NIGHTS
OF AULUS GELLIUS

BOOK I

A. GELLII
NOCTIUM ATTICARUM

LIBER PRIMUS

I

Quali proportione quibusque collectionibus Plutarchus ratiocinatum esse Pythagoram philosophum dixerit de comprehendenda corporis proceritate qua fuit Hercules, cum vitam inter homines viveret.

- 1 PLUTARCHUS in libro quem de Herculis quam diu¹ inter homines fuit animi corporisque ingenio atque virtutibus conscripsit, scite subtiliterque ratiocinatum Pythagoram philosophum dicit in reperienda modulandaque status longitudinisque eius praestantia. Nam cum fere constaret, curriculum stadii quod est Pisis apud Iovem Olympium Herculem pedibus suis metatum idque fecisse longum pedes sescentos, cetera quoque stadia in terra Graecia ab aliis postea instituta pedum quidem esse numero sescentum, sed tamen esse aliquantulum breviora, facile intellexit, modum spatiumque plantae Herculis, ratione proportionis habita, tanto fuisse quam aliorum procerius, quanto Olympicum stadium longius esset quam cetera. Comprehensa autem mensura Hercu-

¹ quam diu, *Klotz*; quantum, *ω*.

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I

Plutarch's account of the method of comparison and the calculations which the philosopher Pythagoras used in determining the great height of Hercules, while the hero was living among men.

IN the treatise¹ which he wrote on the mental and physical endowment and achievements of Hercules while he was among men, Plutarch says that the philosopher Pythagoras reasoned sagaciously and acutely in determining and measuring the hero's superiority in size and stature. For since it was generally agreed that Hercules paced off the race-course of the stadium at Pisae, near the temple of Olympian Zeus, and made it six hundred feet long, and since the other courses in the land of Greece, constructed later by other men, were indeed six hundred feet in length, but yet were somewhat shorter than that at Olympia, he readily concluded by a process of comparison that the measured length of Hercules' foot was greater than that of other men in the same proportion as the course at Olympia was longer than the other stadia. Then, having ascertained the size

¹ This work, probably entitled βίος Ἡρακλέους, has not survived.

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lani pedis, quanta longinquitas corporis ei mensurae conveniret secundum naturalem membrorum omnium inter se competentiam modificatus est atque ita id collegit, quod erat consequens, tanto fuisse Herculem corpore excelsiorem quam alios, quanto Olympicum stadium ceteris pari numero factis anteiret.

II

Ab Herode Attico C. V. tempestive deprompta in quendam iactantem et gloriosum adulescentem, specie tantum philosophiae sectatorem, verba Epicteti Stoici, quibus festiviter a vero Stoico seiunxit vulgus loquacium nebulonum qui se Stoicos nuncuparent.

- 1 HERODES ATTICUS, vir et Graeca facundia et consulari honore praeditus, accersebat saepe, nos cum apud magistros Athenis essemus, in villas ei urbi proximas me et clarissimum virum Servilianum compluresque alios nostrates qui Roma in Graeciam
- 2 ad capiendum ingenii cultum concesserant. Atque ibi tunc, cum essemus apud eum in villa cui nomen est Cephisia, et aestu anni et sidere autumnii flagrantissimo, propulsabamus incommoda caloris lucorum umbra ingentium, longis ambulacris et mollibus, aedium positu refrigeranti, lavacris nitidis et abundis et collucentibus totiusque villae venustate, aquis undique canoris atque avibus personante.

¹ The proper height was six times the length of the foot.

² According to Apollodorus, II. iv. 9, Hercules was 4 cubits in height; according to Herodorus, 4 cubits and one foot; see J. Tzetzes, *Chiliades*, ii. 210. The phrase *ex pede Herculem* has become proverbial, along with *ex ungue leonem* and *ab uno disce omnes* (Virg. *Aen.* ii. 65 f.).

³ *Clarissimus* became a standing title of men of high rank, especially of the senatorial order.

of Hercules' foot, he made a calculation of the bodily height suited to that measure, based upon the natural proportion of all parts of the body, and thus arrived at the logical conclusion that Hercules was as much taller than other men as the course at Olympia exceeded the others that had been constructed with the same number of feet.²

II

The apt use made by Herodes Atticus, the ex-consul, in reply to an arrogant and boastful young fellow, a student of philosophy in appearance only, of the passage in which Epictetus the Stoic humorously set apart the true Stoic from the mob of prating triflers who called themselves Stoics.

WHILE we were students at Athens, Herodes Atticus, a man of consular rank and of true Grecian eloquence, often invited me to his country houses near that city, in company with the honourable³ Servilianus and several others of our countrymen who had withdrawn from Rome to Greece in quest of culture. And there at that time, while we were with him at the villa called Cephisia, both in the heat of summer and under the burning autumnal sun, we protected ourselves against the trying temperature by the shade of its spacious groves, its long, soft⁴ promenades, the cool location of the house, its elegant baths with their abundance of sparkling water, and the charm of the villa as a whole, which was everywhere melodious with plashing waters and tuneful birds.

⁴ Cf. Plin. *Epist.* ii. xvii. 15, vinea . . . nudis etiam pedibus mollis et cedens.

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- 3 Erat ibidem nobiscum simul adulescens philosophiae sectator, "disciplinae," ut ipse dicebat,
 4 "stoicae," sed loquacior inpendio et promptior. Is plerumque in convivio sermonibus, qui post epulas haberi solent, multa atque inmodica de¹ philosophiae doctrinis intempestive atque insubide disserebat praeque se uno ceteros omnes linguae Atticae principes gentemque omnem togatam, quodcumque nomen Latinum rudes esse et agrestes praedicabat atque interea vocabulis haut facile cognitis, syllogismorum captionumque dialecticarum laqueis strepebat, *κυριεύοντας* et *ἡσυχάζοντας* et *σωρείτας* aliosque id genus griphos neminem posse dicens nisi se dissolvere. Rem vero ethicam naturamque humani ingenii virtutumque origines officiaque earum et confinia, aut contra morborum vitiorumque fraudes animorumque labes et² pestilentias, asseverabat nulli esse ulli magis ea omnia explorata, comperta meditataque.
- 5 Cruciatibus autem doloribusque corporis et periculis mortem minitantibus habitum statumque vitae beatae, quem se esse adeptum putabat, neque laedi neque inminui existimabat, ac ne oris quoque et vultus serenitatem stoici hominis umquam ulla posse aegritudine obnubilari.

¹ de, *Vulg.*; omitted by *ω*.

² et, *R. Klotz*; omitted by *ω*

¹ Where there are three propositions, any two of which are at variance with the third, they may be taken in pairs as true, rejecting the third as false. This is called the "master" argument, from *κυριεύω*, "to be master over"; see Epicetetus, ii. 18 and 19. The fallacy is due to the fact that all persons do not hold to the truth of the same pair, and it is impossible to maintain all three propositions at once. The "sorites" raised the question, if one grain at a time were taken from a heap, when it would cease to be a heap; and

There was with us there at the time a young student of philosophy, of the Stoic school according to his own account, but intolerably loquacious and presuming. In the course of the conversations which are commonly carried on at table after dinner, this fellow often used to prattle unseasonably, absurdly, and at immoderate length, on the principles of philosophy, maintaining that compared with himself all the Greek-speaking authorities, all wearers of the toga, and the Latin race in general were ignorant boors. As he spoke, he rattled off unfamiliar terms, the catchwords of syllogisms and dialectic tricks, declaring that no one but he could unravel the "master," the "resting," and the "heap" arguments,¹ and other riddles of the kind. Furthermore, as to ethics, the nature of the human intellect, and the origin of the virtues with their duties and limits, or on the other hand the ills caused by disease and sin, and the wasting and destruction of the soul, he stoutly maintained that absolutely no one else had investigated, understood and mastered all these more thoroughly than himself. Further, he believed that torture, bodily pain and deadly peril could neither injure nor detract from the happy state and condition of life which, in his opinion, he had attained, and that no sorrow could even cloud the serenity of the Stoic's face and expression.

conversely, if one grain at a time were added, when it would become a heap; see Cic. *Acad.* ii. 49. A variant, called the *φαλακρός*, inquired whether a man was bald after the loss of one hair, of two, or of how many. Horace, in *Epist.* ii. 1. 45-47, has combined both of these with the story told by Plutarch of Sertorius (*Sert.* 16). The "silent," or "resting" argument consisted in stopping and refusing to answer. It was used to meet the logical fallacy of the "sorites."

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