

ROZS-NAGY Szilvia

## The Two Cloaks of Aristippos

*When we hear the name of Aristippos, the first thing that comes to our mind is the student of Socrates, the father of the Cyrenaic school who looked at life as a system built of pain and pleasure. Since he taught that people should choose joy and pleasure, he was later considered a hedonist, and people tend to find a life example rather in Diogenes who lived a very simple, transparent and straightforward life. This article wishes to shed light on the life of these men from another angle, from the point of view of reconciliation. This effort may cause disturbances as we take a short leave from the leading philosophical and ethical canon.*

*Through this approach, however, we may get closer to the virtues of openness, knowledge, and giving dignity to our fellows before applying fixed ideas to them. Let us start our meditation on lives, strategies and virtues with a text from Saint Paul: "To those under the Law I behave as one who is under the Law – although I am not under the Law; to those who are without law I am as without law – although not lawless toward God but committed to Christ's law. I have become everything to everybody so that by all means I may have some" (1 Corinthians 9, 19-23).*

### A PERSON OF CAT CHARACTER: REFINED FLEXIBILITY

Charles BAUDELAIRE loved cats. They say that ARISTIPPOS was a man of cat character. Would BAUDELAIRE love ARISTIPPOS?

One day DIOGENES of Sinope was washing some turnip-leaves at the public well of Athens. ARISTIPPOS was going to pass by but DIOGENES addressed him saying, "If you could eat the turnip-leaves, you would not have to go and pay court to tyrants." ARISTIPPOS stopped for a while and looked at him. "If you learnt how to speak with tyrants, you would not have to eat turnip-leaves anymore", he uttered.

They say that DIOGENES of Sinope was a man of stray dog character.

BAUDELAIRE fancied cats because they are peaceful, mystical and they snuggle. They are careful not to have any disorder in their appearance and to their body-care and cleansing. When they are busy with something, they perform it with a noble style, discreetly and tactfully, being cautious not to disturb or embarrass the people around them. They carry music inside and sometimes purr it out of them. They have nothing in com-

mon with those loud and rough merriments that are typical to the dog's cuddle. A cat's joy is tender, soft, delicate and calm. The steely strength of the cat is hidden in its *refined flexibility*.

### THE PRICE TO BE PAID: RISKING OURSELVES

ARISTIPPOS was born in Libya around 435 BC from the most noble and richest family of Cyrene. He was nineteen when he arrived in Greece to see the Olympic Games. There he heard about SOCRATES and went to Athens to become his student.

Unlike his master SOCRATES, when ARISTIPPOS became a teacher he asked his students to pay for their education. The amount was a considerable one. Those who were smart, however, could get some discount, but the less intelligent had to pay a high price. When we are talking about reconciliation and reconciled diversities, we do not mean that every piece is to be held on an equal level. There are differences and they make the palette rich in colours.

There are differences and they are to be realised, handled and valued separately according to their level of contribution to reaching the final aim. Each of us, however, has to learn the lessons of reconciliation and has to pay for them. To learn how to measure and to learn to be measured, to develop openness and to be detached even from one's very self, to incorporate values and pains and to move beyond them in freedom has its own price and we have to pay for it. The payment means *risking ourselves* and aiming the highest.

One father found the price too high and said that he could buy a slave for this amount of money. "Just buy a slave," ARISTIPPOS told him, "then you will have two slaves at the end: your son and the one you bought."

### SAVING BY REDUCING?

DIOGENES was born in Sinope in 404 BC. He was sent into exile by the people of Sinope, so he went to Athens and joined the Cynics' school. He was searching for *freedom*, which he thought is the highest good for one's spirit. Freedom, as he thought, can be found only in pure independence. Freedom for him meant to be *'free from'*. That is why he taught to people not to be slaves of their physical or emotional needs, not to fear of cold, hunger, loneliness and not to have desire for sexual life, money, power





possible without *authentic knowledge* about each other.

POLYXENOS the Sophist paid a visit to him, but seeing the women all around in expensive clothes and the spend-thrift food on the table he started to accuse him that these are not worthy of a philosopher. After some time ARISTIPPUS questioned him whether he could imagine spending this day in his company. When POLYXENOS nodded his assent, ARISTIPPUS continued, "then what is your problem exactly? It seems you only accuse the expenses but not the repast."

Someone else accused ARISTIPPUS because he went to see LAIS, the hetæra. "The shame is not about going to visit her but you bring shame on yourself when you cannot leave her." Philosophy, he explained, taught him to be able to meet anyone and spend time with that person. To give your life a high quality will not come when you leave things out or avoid getting to know them but when you know their values and aims and you are able to *use* them by being their ruler without being their slave.

### THE TRUTH HIDDEN IN PARADOXES

Once there was a *Rabbi* who was accused of being drunkard and frequently eating together with people of low castes and prostitutes, unlike JOHN the Baptist who lived a simple life and was fasting.

God is the God of paradoxes. "Only God has the power, God Who is love. Love absorbs everything into itself; its embrace dissolves even the hardest matter: When the worst evil and death become yours, both lose their own value; when you allow your own death and accept evil into yourself, both become your property and they lose their own price. Therefore, may negation be as powerful as can be, there is something that absorbs negation and thus becomes its own death, becomes the almightiness of the living, eternal God. Nothing can happen to us in God's embrace" (Peter MLAKAR).

Christianity is a religion of paradoxes. Christians received the commandment to love their neighbours as they love themselves. They have to be clear about the world that surrounds them, the values that are appealing to them, the good, the bad and the beauty and all the things in between. Then they learn that nothing more can

be told about God than God is *Love* and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. And they enter into love-relationships. They accept the new wine, they even incorporate it. They love and care and forgive and reconcile though they know that they do not belong to this earth only as they are mates of the saints and citizens of two worlds.

### PERSON OF VIRTUES AND CONTRADICTIONS

ARISTIPPUS was not a Christian. Some of his principles may differ from ours. He did not focus much on salvation and eternal life but on pleasure in its purest form. He was a philosopher from Athens who lived out a working methodology of reconciliation. He handled the transcendence and his human fellows with openness, humbleness and the utmost dignity.

It seems he knew that situations cannot be solved in the same way and at the same level they were produced. There is a need for paradigm-shift. Reconciliation is about forgiveness. Forgiveness is about knowing the situation, the causes and the persons involved and moving beyond them toward the eternal values. Reconciliation is about humbleness, openness, and self-denial. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life on my account will save it", as the *Rabbi* uttered once.

ARISTIPPUS was not a saint. PLATO could not stand him, DIOGENES said that he is the enemy of all virtues, XENOPHON hated him. But I imagine BAUDELAIRE, the great lover of cats, would have been delighted in his company.

#### Suggested Reading

*The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; Aristippus.

[www.utm.edu/research/iep/a/aristip.htm](http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/a/aristip.htm).

GAUTIER Theophile, *Charles Baudelaire*. London, 1915.

<http://membres.lycos.fr/almasty/gbause/1.htm>.

ARNS Inke, *Neue Slovenische Kunst*, NSK. Regensburg, 2002.

ROZS-NAGY Szilvia is Evangelical-Lutheran, an ecumenical theologian from Hungary and a member of KÖD (Magyar SCM). Currently she is writing her PhD on ecumenical and interreligious liturgies. She was a member of the Executive Committee of the Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE) from 2001 till 2005. Her email address is [szilvianagyhun@yahoo.com](mailto:szilvianagyhun@yahoo.com).

## Agnes AVAGYAN - *Two Hands, One Picture*

Born in 1980, Agnes AVAGYAN started drawing when she was two years old. From her early childhood on she was used to hearing that drawing is a tough profession as it does not provide easy living. Fortunately, her passion for art was too strong to be discouraged by this argument. She started her education in arts in 1994 at the Art College and now continues her studies in the Yerevan State Academy of Fine Arts.

Agnes has had personal exhibitions in Yerevan, Armenia (1995, 1996, 1997, 2002), St. Petersburg, Russia (1996), Aleppo, Syria (2002), Beirut, Lebanon (2003), and has taken part in many group exhibitions and contests in Armenia and abroad. Since 1997, she has been a scholar of the Peace Fund.

She has collaborated with numerous magazines, such as *Hey*, *Manana*, *Gordzenker*, *Mankadz Yerkir*, *Karavarum*, and has drawn cartoons for several newspapers. She also illustrated some books with her colourful and bright paintings, including *The Zoo-Boy*, UNICEF's *Children's Rights*, and *Peter Pan* translated into Armenian. At present, she works as a cartoonist for *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*, an official organ of the National Assembly of Armenia, and a weekly online news magazine, [www.ArmeniaNow.com](http://www.ArmeniaNow.com).

In 1996, Agnes' work won the first prize for Best Emblem at the UNICEF Competition for Children's Communication Day. In March 2002 she was chosen to take part in *The Second International Caricature Forum* in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), where she was the youngest and the only female participant. In the years 2000, 2001 and 2005, Agnes was the youngest artist to participate in the exhibition of the best cartoonists of Armenia. Agnes' works have been published in Armenian, Russian, British, French, Lebanese, American, Canadian and Arab newspapers as well as in various TV programmes.