

HOW TO BECOME A PHILOSOPHER:

AN ANCIENT GREEK ACTION GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

This book (guide book, action guide, cookbook for living) running against the contemporary grain of semantic intellectuality, grows out of the axiom that a tiny part of the force behind a philosopher can be captured if one were to do what they did.

Most people today who use the term philosophy to describe what they do may seem to *do* very little. To this claim they may retort, "what exactly do you mean by *do*?" Perplexed, we would say "you sit around reading and writing esoterically, sometimes speaking this writing aloud at conferences, sometimes teaching it to others." And while this is clearly doing something, this doing says almost nothing about what a philosopher *really* does. For in our times, what makes a philosopher a philosopher and what makes philosophy philosophy is much less a matter of what is done, but rather what is said.

But isn't this true of all the intellectual recluses and academic disciplines? I pick on the philosophers because of a philosophy's particular origin story that betrays its current conditions...

Western Philosophy, in Ancient Greece, was quite different to philosophy today. Foucault might say that it was a practice of care of the self. Martha Nussbaum has said something about how it was a therapeutic practice seeking human flourishing. Pierre Hadot says it was a living practice of self transformation. In either case it was a practice, a set of actions, a way of life. Diogenes Laertius knew this quite well when he wrote his *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, a book which goes into excessive depths regarding the lives of dozens of ancient Greek Philosophers.

To make this book, I extracted fragments from *The Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* that could stand alone as guide-posts of flourishing self-transformation. To read a passage is to quickly immerse oneself in a series of actions, lives and methods. To read a passage is to begin a process of becoming a philosopher by acquainting oneself not with their ideas, but with their way of life.

The traditional answer to the question "How does one become a Philosopher?" is -- read. You must read all of the dead philosophers and then you will be able to speak Philosophy. Your language will become particular in the way that it hones in on certain concepts and refines them. You will become your own philosopher by making beautiful masks that play off of a variety of other's philosophical terms.

Rather, this book ask, that in order for you to become a philosopher, you must act. You must act in accordance with all the dead philosophers, picking particular actions of theirs to refine, hone, adapt, and reconfigure eventually constructing a behavior-costume composed of a large variety of other philosopher's terms.

HOW TO BECOME AESCHINESIAN

Start your life as a sausage-maker

Compose forensic speeches for victims of injustice

HOW TO BECOME ANACHARSISIAN

Do not drink olive oil (it is a drug that induces madness)

HOW TO BECOME ANAXAGORASIAN

Set mind above matter

Commit suicide if you cannot bear an insult

HOW TO BECOME ANAXARCHUSIAN

Say that you know nothing, not even the fact that you know nothing

HOW TO BECOME ANAXIMANDERIAN

Affirm the unlimited

HOW TO BECOME ANTISTHENIAN

Walk 5 miles a day to listen to a philosopher

Drive the majority of your students away with a silver rod

Enjoy philosophy so you can have conversation with yourself

Double your cloak

Let your beard grow

Use a cane and a knapsack

HOW TO BECOME ARCESILAUSIAN

Attempt to argue both sides of the question

Be highly extravagant

Host dinners only for those who share your tastes

Have excessive sexual desire for boys

Advise your students to hear other philosophers

Bring the course of the discussion back to the starting point and adapt it to every occasion

HOW TO BECOME ARISTIPPUSIAN

Be skillful at adapting yourself to place and time and person, and playing your role suitably under all circumstances

Put up with people spitting on you

Be able to consort confidently with everyone

Spit in the faces of those deserving

HOW TO BECOME ARISTOTELIAN

Chose a covered walk where you can walk up and down discussing philosophy with your students until it is time to rub yourselves with oil

Frame a constitution

Erect a new president of your school every 10 days

Bath in a tub of warm oil and then sell the oil

Do without being ordered what some are forced to do by their fear of the law

HOW TO BECOME BIONIAN

Be able to make fun of your own arrogance

Be theatrical

Make parodies

Ridicule everything, using vulgar terms for things

HOW TO BECOME CARNEADIC

Let your hair and nails grow long from devotion to your study (Carneades)

HOW TO BECOME CHILONIAN

Foresee the future.

When speaking, do not gesticulate (it is a sign of madness).

Do not desire impossibilities.

Do not hurry on the road.

Take exercise grinding corn.

HOW TO BECOME CLEOBULUSIAN

Be fonder of hearing than of speaking.

HOW TO BECOME CRATESIAN

Enter every house and reprimand its occupants

HOW TO BECOME A CYNIC

Devote yourself solely to ethics

Live frugally

Eat only for nourishment

Wear only one garment

HOW TO BECOME DEMOCRITIAN

Spend your entire fortune and get support from your brother

Build a tiny house in a garden and shut yourself in

HOW TO BECOME DIOGENSIAN

Make every place for your purpose: breakfasting, sleeping, conversing

Praise those who plan to do something but end up not doing it

Reprimand someone deserving by tying a rope to the neck of a wine-jar and dragging it around

Frequently masturbate in the public saying "if only one could relieve hunger by rubbing one's belly"

Practice in order to overcome anything

Hold wives and children in common

Neglect music, geometry and astronomy

Get captured by pirates

Acquire a glowing appearance by anointing yourself with oil

HOW TO BECOME DIONYSIAN

Take frequently to brothels

HOW TO BECOME EUFOXUSIAN

Shave your beard and your eyebrows

Arrange couches in a semi-circle

HOW TO BECOME EMPEDOCLESIAN

Perform magic tricks

Make bags out of donkey skins and stretch them out near crests and mountain ridges in order to capture the wind

Bring an end to pestilence

Divert rivers

Don purple robes and a golden waistband

HOW TO BECOME EPICURIAN

Read charms

Work for a paltry wage

Be courteous

Be gentle to your servants

Vomit twice a day from over-indulgence

Have numerous friends

Hold private property

Use ordinary words

Regard all senses as equal

HOW TO BECOME EPIMENIDESIAN

Step out on the road at midday to seek a sheep; fall asleep for fifty seven years.

Purify a city and bring an end to pestilence by letting black and white sheep go wherever they like, and sacrificing them to the local deity on the ground that they lay down upon.

HOW TO BECOME HERACLITIAN

Play with children

Out of hatred for mankind, depart for the mountains and live on grass and herbs

Become no one's student

As a last effort to save your life, have your servants plaster you with cow dung

HOW TO BECOME MENEDEMUSIAN

Pick up a twig and trace the ground of the figure of a young man who is bugging you until the young man understands the insult and departs

In efforts to curb a man's extravagance, get invited to his house for dinner and eat nothing but olives

Arrange your classes such that there is no visible order; each student shall listen from wherever he happens to be walking about or sitting

Be entrusted with the city's affairs

HOW TO BECOME METROCLESIAN

Fart while giving a speech, get embarrassed, shut yourself up at home intending to starve yourself to death.

HOW TO BECOME MONIMUSIAN

Instantly feign madness

HOW TO BECOME A NAKED SAGE

Express philosophy in riddles.

HOW TO BECOME ORPHEUSATIC

Meet death at the hands of women.

HOW TO BECOME A PERIANDERIAN

Send your sons to be castrated.

Have intercourse with your mother in secret and take pleasure in it.

Keep your burial place unknown.

Have a bodyguard.

Transform your rule into a tyranny.

Unintentionally murder your wife.

HOW TO BECOME PHERECYDESIAN

Predict shipwrecks.

Predict earthquakes.

HOW TO BECOME PLATONIC

Produce theatre

Travel to Cyrene to learn Mathematics

Travel to Italy to learn from a Pythagorean

Travel to Egypt to see the priests

Create a synthesis of doctrines

Distinguish the ideas by themselves

Attempt to persuade a tyrant to live philosophically

Write dialogues

Posit two universal principles

HOW TO BECOME POLEMONIAN

In youth be unbridled and promiscuous

Go to school drunk wearing a garland on you head and let yourself be lured into philosophy by a lecture on temperance.

When a mad dog bites you in the back of your thigh, do not turn pale

Argue while walking about

Withdraw from society and pass your days in the garden while your students erect little shelters

HOW TO BECOME PYRRHONIAN

Paint

Live in solitude

Go abroad without telling anyone

Roam about with whomever you meet

Talk to yourself

Wash a pig

When harassed by questions, strip off your clothes and swim across a river

HOW TO BECOME PYTHAGORIAN

Initiate yourself in the Greek and barbarian mysteries

Establish laws

Recall everything

When dead, keep your memories in tact to be passed on to your disciples

Have sex in the winter, not in the summer

Have your disciples listen to you for five years without speaking or seeing you

Sacrifice 100 cattle in order to make important philosophical discoveries

Eat only bread and honey

Wear white spotless robes

Refrain from laughter

Practice divination

Build underground chambers

Instruct your mother to write down everything that occurs and at what time

Do not do philosophy in public

HOW TO BECOME A SKEPTIC

Overturn all dogma

Use words merely as aids

Investigate not what one thinks (what one thinks is clear), but the role sensations play in shaping our thoughts

Do not suppose that what is convincing is true

HOW TO BECOME SOCRATIC

Exercise and keep in good condition

Patiently bear pummeling and hair tearing

Stay in the same position for an entire night thinking

Pride yourself on your simplicity

Never take a fee

Praise leisure as the finest of possessions

Be adept at persuading and dissuading

Be able to arouse a proud spirit

Dance constantly

Learn to play the lyre late in life

If young, constantly examine yourself in a mirror

Make the weaker argument the stronger

Do not recognize the gods recognized by the city

Converse not to change people's minds but to learn the truth

HOW TO BECOME SOLONIAN

Frame excellent laws

Curtail the honor of athletes

HOW TO BECOME SPEUSIPPUSIAN

Dedicate statues

In a fit of anger throw a puppy down a well

Divulge others' secret techniques

Discern the common element in all studies and relate them to one another as far as possible

Devise a way of making firewood portable

Suffer from lice

HOW TO BECOME A STOIC

Make a practice of concealing bad things and bringing to light whatever is good

Be unpretentious

Don't be overly busy

Don't live in solitude

Drink in moderation

On occasion become visited by strange impressions that do not accord with the idea of what is worth choosing

End your life if you are suffering severe pain

HOW TO BECOME THALESIAN

Attribute life to inanimate objects.

Give excellent council in political affairs.

Have no children, out of love for children.

Prove it is easy to be wealthy.

Choose only one thing: that which has merit.

Write nothing

HOW TO BECOME THEODORUSIAN

Openly and without any embarrassment, engage in sexual relations with those whom you love

HOW TO BECOME TIMONIAN

Dance

Write lampoons and obscene verse

HOW TO BECOME XENOCRATIAN

Refuse prostitutes such that they report you are a statue, not a man

Be exceptionally independent

If a sparrow takes refuge in your cloak, stroke it and let it go

Don't pay taxes, be up for sale by your government, and get purchased by a famous orator

HOW TO BECOME XENOPHONIAN

Hunt, entertain friends, write histories

Upon hearing of your son's death, do not shed a tear

HOW TO BECOME ZENONIAN

Assume the complexion of the dead

Sit on the end of the couch to avoid being near people

Walk with no more than 3 companions

Have a cohort of naked dirty fellows

Have a shriveled countenance

Wear a cloak of barbarous stinginess

Recline in silent at drinking parties to remind those present of how to keep silent

Before long become almost proverbial

HOW TO BECOME ZENO OF ELEAIN

Sink your teeth into a tyrant's ear