

MANUSCRIPT 15

Diogenes Laertius, 3rd cent.

De vita et moribus philosophorum, in the translation of Ambrogio Traversari.

MS. 15

Italy (in Latin)

Ca. 1450-1470

Almost nothing is known of Diogenes Laertius, the author of the Lives and Opinions of the Philosophers. It is usually surmised, from some slight evidences to be found in this work, that he lived in the first half of the 3rd century. He is the author of the only comprehensive history of philosophy surviving from antiquity, a compilation of information from a wide array of earlier sources. The work, in 10 books, consists of a series of biographies, ranging from a few lines to many pages, grouped chronologically according to the various schools of philosophy. The end of book 7 is lacking in all extant manuscripts.

This Latin translation was made by Ambrogio Traversari at the urging of Pope Martin V (1417-31). Traversari, who later became general of the Camaldulensian Order, had studied Greek in Constantinople; he began work on the translation about 1424, but did not complete it until 1432. Traversari was assisted in translation of difficult Greek passages by Carlo Marsuppini. In addition, Francesco Filelfo was engaged to render verse translations of Diogenes' epigrams on the philosophers, but these were never completed and the work appeared without them.

Bibliographical note:

Diogenes Laertius, tr. Ambrogio Traversari, De vitis . . . eorum qui in philosophia claruerunt (Paris, 1570)

Diogenes Laertius, tr. R. D. Hicks, Lives of Eminent Philosophers (London, 1925)

Richard Hope, The Book of Diogenes Laertius (New York, 1930)

Charles L. Stinger, Humanism and the Church Fathers (Albany, 1977)

Goodspeed, E. J. A Descriptive Catalog of Manuscripts in the University of Chicago Library (Chicago, 1912).

DESCRIPTION. Folio, on paper, written probably in Florence ca. 1450-1470 : 290 X 215 (202 X 112) mm. : collation, i, 1-19<sup>10</sup>, 20<sup>2</sup> = 192 ff. + i (parchment flyleaf) : 34 long lines ruled in dry point : catch-words in lower right-hand margin surrounded by 4 flourishes. Contemporary blind-tooled brown calf over wooden boards, rebacked.

2° folio: rauca uox

Fol. 1 (red caps): Incipit prefatio Ambrosij monachi Chamaldulensis in libro Laertij Diogenis de uita et moribus philosophorum ad Cosmam Medicem: beg. Voluenti mihi quedam greca uolumina. Ends (f. 2) iure tuo resecabis  
Fol. 2 (red caps): Laertij Diogenis uite atque sententie eorum qui in philosophia claruerunt: beg. Philosophiam a barbaris initia sumpsisse. Ends (f. 192<sup>V</sup>) defuncti celeriozem obitum: (alternate lines of red and black caps) Laertij Diogenis de uitis atque sententijs eorum qui in philosophia claruerunt liber decimus et ultimus explicit feliciter Finis

SCRIPT. Written in a rapid, skilful humanistic cursive, possibly by Gherardo del Ciriagio. The letters are carefully made by a pen with a relatively broad nib, held at an angle of approx. 50°. There is not much "leading" between the lines, and the writing has a squarish appearance. Tell-tale letters are: squat a with prominent upper horizontal stroke, squat-bowled d, e often with tongue protruding, usually 2-stroke f and long s, Poggiesque g, h with main stroke which tends not to reach the

writing line, round gothic final s occasional, ct and CT ligatured, B and P with approach strokes, I with a tick, S with straight horizontal stroke. Spaces, preceded by a tiny g, have been left for Greek words which have not been filled in. Marginal notes here and there in at least three 15th and 16th century hands. The index on the front fly-leaf, dating from ca. 1530-1550, bears the subscription: "Finis huiusce operis tabule A me Camillo brunello Th<sup>l</sup>ti [?] scripte atque compositae etc. Vale . . ."

DECORATION. On f. 1 is a 6-line initial V in burnished gold with white vine decoration extending into the side and top margins, with rayed discs. Colors used are pure blue and pale muddy red, dotted white, and deep green, dotted yellow. The flowers at the ends of the vine are pointy, in the Florentine style. A similar but less elaborate initial P appears on f. 2. Headings to books and chapters are in red capitals (occasionally formal or cursive minuscule, e.g. ff. 101<sup>v</sup> and 102<sup>v</sup>). Each book begins with a 3-line built-up roman capital in blue, and each chapter begins with a similar 2-line initial.

PROVENANCE. A 16th century hand (possibly the same that wrote the table of contents) has written on the end paste-down: "Al mio Magnifico & honorando Sa<sup>l</sup>m [?] A li di passati [?] Io pier martira' sticti In . . . monte Sancto Martino . . . " Obtained from Calvary (1891).