

## Marx's Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy <sup>[179]</sup>

### First Notebook

#### Diogenes Laertius, Book Ten

##### Epicurus

"...but on coming across the works of Democritus [Epicurus] turned to philosophy." p. 10.

(Posidonius the Stoic and Nicolaus and Sotion in the twelfth book of the work entitled *Dioclean Refutations* allege) "... that he put forward as his own the doctrines of Democritus about atoms and of Aristippus about pleasure." p. 11.

"I [Epicurus] know not how to conceive the good, apart from the pleasures of taste, [sexual pleasures,] the pleasures of sound and the pleasures of beautiful form." p.12.

"Among the early philosophers ... his favourite was Anaxagoras, although he occasionally disagreed with him...." p. 16.

"It [Epicurean philosophy] is divided into three parts -- The Canon, Physics, Ethics" [p. 25.]

##### I. The Canon

"Now in *The Canon* Epicurus affirms that our *sensations* and *preconceptions* (*prolepseis*) and our *feelings* are the *standards* of truth; the Epicureans generally make *perceptions of mental presentations* to be also standards." pp. 25-26. "His own statements are also to be found ...in the *Principal Doctrines*." p. 26.

I. "...the *sensations are true*. Every sensation ... is devoid of reason and incapable of memory; for neither is it *self-caused* nor, regarded as having an *external cause*, can it *add* anything thereto or *take* anything therefrom, neither *judge* nor *deceive*."

"Nor is there anything which can refute sensations: one sensation cannot convict another and kindred sensation, for they are equally valid (*aequipollentiam*); nor can one sensation refute another which is not kindred, for the objects which the two judge are not the same; nor can one sensation refute another, since we pay equal heed to all; nor again can reason refute them, for reason is dependent on sensation.

"And the reality of ... perceptions guarantees the truth of our senses. But seeing and hearing are just as real as feeling pain. Between being true and being a reality, there is no difference." p. 26.

"Hence it is from phenomena that we must seek to obtain information about the unknown. For all our *notions are derived from perceptions, either by actual contact or by analogy, or resemblance, or composition*, with some slight aid from reasoning." p[p]. 26[-27].

"And the objects presented to madmen as well as presentations in dreams are true, for they ... produce movements, which that which does not exist never does." p. 27.

II. "By preconception they [the Epicureans] mean a *sort of apprehension* or a *right opinion* or *notion* or *universal idea stored in the mind*; that is, a *recollection of an external object often presented*, e. g., such and such a thing is a man; for *no sooner is the word man uttered than we think of his shape by an act of preconception* in which the senses take the lead. Thus *the object primarily denoted by every term is then evident*. And we could not seek what we do seek, unless we knew it before. ...we could not name anything at all, if we did not previously know its form by way

of *preconception*. It follows, then, that *preconceptions are evident*. Mere *opinion* also depends on a *previous evident presentation*, by reference to which we *form a judgment* [...]. *Opinion* they also call ... *assumption*. They say it is sometimes *true*, sometimes *false* by something being *added* to it or *taken away* from it, or by its being *confirmed* or *contradicted as being evident or not*. For if it is *confirmed* or not *contradicted*, it is *true*, and if it is not *confirmed* or is *contradicted*, it is *false*. Hence the introduction of '*that which awaits*,' for example, when one *waits* and then approaches the tower and establishes whether it looks from close quarters as it does from afar." [p]p. [27-]28.

"They affirm that there are two feelings: *pleasure and pain* The first is *favourable* to nature, the second *hostile*; according to these is *determined* what we must *strive after* and what we must *avoid*." [p]p. [28-]29.

"There are two kinds of *inquiry*, the one concerned *with things*, the other with the *mere word*." p. 29.

### **Epicurus to Menoeceus**

"First believe that *God is a ... being indestructible and blessed* according to the *universal notion of God*, and do not *ascribe* to him anything which is *incompatible with his immortality*, or that *agrees not with his blessedness*." p. 82.

"For *gods verily there are. For the notion of them is evident*" (cf. "the universal notion of God", *consensus omnium, c[onsensus] gentium*), [The consensus of all, the consensus of the peoples.] "*but they are not such as the multitude believe*, seeing that men do not *steadfastly maintain the notions they form respecting them*."

"Not the man who *denies the gods worshipped by the multitude*, but *he who affirms of the gods what the multitude believe about them is truly impious*." For the *utterances of the multitude about the gods* are not *true preconceptions*, but *false assumptions*; hence the *multitude believe that the greatest evils happen to the wicked and the greatest blessings happen to the good from the hand of the gods*. For being *entirely prejudiced in favour of their own virtues*, they *grant their favour to those who are like themselves and consider as alien whatever is not so*." p. 83

"*Accustom thyself to believe that death is nothing to us*, for all that is good or bad is based on *sentience*, and *death is the loss of sentience*."

"Therefore a *right understanding that death is nothing to us makes transient life worth living*, not by *adding indefinite time to life*, but by *putting an end to the yearning after immortality*. For *life has no terrors* for him who has *thoroughly apprehended that ceasing to live has no terrors*. *Foolish, therefore*, is the man who says that *he fears death not because it causes suffering when it comes*, but because *it causes suffering when it is yet to come*. For that which *causes no annoyance when it is present causes only imaginary suffering when it is expected*. *Death, which is indeed the most terrifying of all evils, is nothing to us since, as long as we are, death is not come, and as soon as death is come, we are no more. It is nothing then, either to the living or to the dead, since for the former it is not, and the latter are no longer*." pp. 83-84.

"*He who admonishes the young to live honourably and the old to die honourably, is foolish*, not merely because of the *desirableness of life*, but also because the *striving to live honourably and the striving to die honourably are one and the same thing*." p. 84.

"We must however remember that the future neither depends on us nor is altogether independent of us, so that we must not expect it as something which will certainly be nor give up hope of it as of something which will certainly not be." p. 85.

"... some desires are natural, others are vain, and among the natural ones some are necessary, others natural only. And among the necessary ones some are necessary for happiness (as the desire to free the body of uneasiness), others for very life." p. 85.

"An error-free consideration of these things can lead ... to health of body and ataraxy of soul, for these are the aim of a blessed life. For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and not to live in confusion. And when once we have attained this, every tempest of the soul is laid, for man no longer needs to seek for something which he still lacks or for anything else through which the welfare of the soul and the body will be complete. For we need pleasure when the lack of pleasure causes us pain, but when we feel no pain, we no longer need pleasure." p. 85.

"Wherefore we say that pleasure is the beginning and the end of the blessed life. We apprehend pleasure as the first and innate good and we proceed from it in all that we do or refrain from doing and to it we come back, inasmuch as this feeling serves us as the guide-line by which we judge of everything good." [p]p. [85-]86.

"And since pleasure is our first and innate good for that reason we do not choose every pleasure ....

"All pleasure therefore, because it is suited to us by nature, is a good, yet not every pleasure is choiceworthy; just as all pain is an evil and yet not all pain is to be avoided under all circumstances. All these matters must rather be decided by weighing one against another and from the standpoint of advantage and disadvantage, for what is good proves at certain times to be an evil for us, and conversely what is evil proves to be a good." p. 86.

"Again we regard independence of outward things as a great good, not so as to be satisfied in every case with little, but in order to be contented with little when abundance is lacking, being honestly convinced that those who least need luxury enjoy it most and that everything which is natural is easy to obtain, while that which is vain and worthless is hard to procure." p. 86.

"[...] By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul..." p. 87.

"Of all this the beginning and the supreme good is reasonableness, and hence it is more precious even than philosophy, from which all other virtues spring, and they teach us that one cannot live pleasantly unless one lives reasonably, honourably [and justly], [and that one cannot live reasonably, honourably] and justly without living pleasantly. For the virtues are closely connected with pleasant living, and Pleasant living is inseparable from them." p. 88.

"Who, then, in your opinion, is superior to him who thinks piously of the gods and is quite fearless of death, who has reflected on the purpose of nature and understands that the greatest good is easy to reach and to attain whereas the worst of evils lasts only a short time or causes short pains? Necessity, which has been introduced by some as the ruler over all things, is not the ruler, he maintains, over that some of which depends on chance and some on our arbitrary will. Necessity is not subject to persuasion; chance, on the other hand, is inconstant. But our will is free; it can entail blame and also the opposite." p. 88.

"It would be better to accept the myth about the gods than to bow beneath the yoke of fate imposed by the Physicists, for the former holds out hope of obtaining mercy by honouring the gods, and the latter, inexorable necessity. But he [the wise man] must accept chance, not god as the multitude do

... and not an *uncertain cause* .... He considers it better to be unhappy but reasonable than to be happy but unreasonable. It is, of course, better when in actions a good decision attains a good issue also through the favour of circumstances." [p]p. [88-]89.

"[...] you will never be disturbed, but will live as a god among men. For a man who lives in the midst of intransient blessings is not like a mortal being." p. 89.

"Elsewhere he [Epicurus] rejects the *whole of divination* .... *There is no divination, and even if there is, what happens does not rest with us* .... " [p. 89].

"He differs from the Cyrenaics in his teaching on pleasure. They *do not recognise pleasure in a state of rest, but only pleasure in motion*. But Epicurus admits both, the *pleasure of the mind* as well as the *pleasure of the body* ... *for one can conceive Pleasure in a state of rest as well as in motion*. But Epicurus says ... the following: '*Ataraxy and freedom from pain are sensations of pleasure in a state of rest, joy and delight are seen to be effective only in motion.*'" p. 90.

"He further differs from the Cyrenaics in this: they hold that *bodily pains are worse than mental pains* ... whereas he holds mental pains to be worse, since the flesh is tormented only by that which is present, the mind by that which is past as well as by that which is present and that which is coming. So also are the pleasures of the mind greater." p.90.

"And as proof that pleasure is the end he adduces the fact that living beings, as soon as they are born, *naturally and unaccountably* to themselves *find satisfaction in pleasure but reject pain*. *Instinctively, then, we shun pain* .... " [pp. 90-91.]

"And the *virtues too are chosen on account of pleasure and not for themselves* ... he says also that *only virtue is inseparable from pleasure, all the rest is separable, for instance human things*." p.91.

### **[Principal Doctrines]**

"A *blessed and immortal being has no trouble himself nor brings it on anybody else*; hence he *knows no anger or partiality, for the like exists only in the weak*."

"Elsewhere he says that the *gods are discernible by reason alone*, not, indeed, being *numerically distinct*, yet through *resemblance* (as a result of the *continuous influx of similar images made precisely for this purpose*) *human in appearance*." pp. 91-92.

"*The highest peak of pleasure is the exclusion of all pain*. For *wherever pleasure reigns, as long as it continues, there is no pain or grief, nor both together*." p. 92.

"It is impossible to live pleasantly without living *reasonably, honourably and justly*, and it is impossible to live *reasonably, honourably and justly without living pleasantly*." p. 92.

"*No pleasure is in itself an evil*, but that which produces certain pleasures *causes manifold disturbances of pleasure*." p. 93.

"If *all pleasure were accumulated and with time had become compact*, this concentrate would be just as [perfect] as principal parts of nature, and the *sensations of pleasure would never differ one from another*." p. 93.

"It is impossible to banish fear over matters of the greatest importance if one does not know the essence of the universe but is apprehensive on account of what the myths tell us. Hence without the study of nature one cannot attain pure pleasure." p[p]. 93[-94].

"If we were not alarmed by the meteors and by death, as to how it might in some way or other affect us, and if we were moreover able to comprehend the limits of pain and desire, we should need no study of nature." p. 93.

"It is useless to provide security against men so long as we are alarmed by things up above and things under the earth and in general things in the boundless universe. For security against men exists only for a definite time." p. 94.

"The same security which we attain by quiet and withdrawal from the multitude arises through the possibility of banishing [by moderation those desires which are not necessary] and through the very simple [and very easy] attainment of [the necessary things]." p. 94.

"The wealth of nature is limited and easily obtainable, but that which arises from vain fancies extends into infinity." p. 94.

"Pleasure of the flesh does not increase any more once the pain of privation has been removed, it is then subject only to variation." p. 94.

"The peak of thought (as far as joy is concerned) in *fathoming* precisely those questions (and those related to them) which most alarm the mind." p. 94.

"Unlimited time contains the same pleasure as the limited if its limits are measured with the necessary discernment." p. 95.

"Limits of pleasure are prescribed to the flesh, but the yearning for unlimited time has made them recede to infinity; but the mind, which has made clear to itself the aim and the limits of the flesh and has extinguished desires concerning eternity, has made a complete life possible for us and we no longer need infinite time. And it does not shun pleasure, even when circumstances cause a parting from life, accepting the end of the best life as a consummation." p. 95.

"We must always have before our mind's eye the set aim to which we refer all our judgments; if not, everything will be full of disorder and unrest." p. 95.

"If you fight against all sensations, you will have nothing by which to be guided in judging those which you declare to be false." p. 95.

"Unless on every occasion you refer all your actions to the end prescribed by nature, but swerve and (whether in shunning or in striving after something) turn to something else, your actions will not be in harmony with your words." p. 96.

"Some desires are natural and necessary, others natural [but] not necessary, and others again neither natural nor necessary, but the offspring of vain fancy." p. 96.

"The same knowledge which fills us with assurance that terrors are neither eternal nor of long duration enables us to see that in our limited lifetime the security of friendship is the most reliable." p. 97.

The following passages represent Epicurus' views on spiritual nature, the state. The contract (sunqkh) he considers as the basis, and accordingly, only utility (sumjeron) as the end.

"Natural right is a mutual agreement, contracted for the purpose of utility, not to harm or allow to be harmed." p.97.

“For all living beings which could not enter into mutual contracts not to harm each other or allow each other to be harmed, there is neither justice nor injustice. It is the same, too, with peoples who have been either unable or unwilling to enter into contracts not to harm each other or allow each other to be harmed.” p. 98.

“Justice is not something existing in itself; it exists in mutual relations, wherever and whenever an agreement is concluded not to harm each other or allow each other to be harmed.” p. 98.

“Injustice is not in itself an evil, but the evil lies in the fearful anxiety over its remaining concealed from the guardians of the law appointed to deal with it .... For whether he [the transgressor of the law] will remain undiscovered until death, is uncertain.” p. 98. “In general, the same justice is valid for all (for it is something useful in mutual intercourse); but the special conditions of the country and the totality of other possible grounds bring it about that the same justice is not valid for all.” p. 98.

“That which proves to be useful for the needs of mutual intercourse, that which is considered just, has the essence of right when the same is valid for everyone. If, however, somebody stipulates this, but it does not turn out to be to the advantage of mutual intercourse, then it no longer has the essence of justice.” p.99.

“And when the usefulness which is contained in right has ceased to exist but for a certain time continues to correspond to the conception of right, then it has nevertheless during that time remained right for those who do not let themselves be deluded by empty talk, but take many things into account.” p. 99.

“Where, without any new circumstances having arisen, that which is considered as right proves in practice not to correspond to the conception of right, then it is not right; but where, new circumstances having arisen, the same valid right is no longer useful, it was indeed formerly right, when it was useful for the mutual intercourse of citizens, but later when it was no longer useful, it was no longer right.” p. 99.

“He who knew how best to gain self-assurance from the external circumstances procured for himself that which was possible, as something not alien to himself, and considered that which was not possible as alien to himself.” p. 99

### **End of the tenth book of Diogenes Laertius Epicurus to Herodotus**

“In the first place ... we must understand what it is that words denote, so that we have something to which we can refer opinions or inquiries or doubts, and by which we can test them, and so that everything does not slip from us into infinity without our having a judgment on it and that we are not left with mere empty words. For it is necessary that the original meaning of every word should be perceived and need no proof. if we want to have something to which we can refer inquiries or doubts or opinions.” pp. 30-31.

It is significant that Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*, makes the same remark on the relation of language to philosophising. Since the ancient philosophers, not excluding the Sceptics, all begin by presupposing consciousness, a firm foothold is necessary. This is provided by the concepts presented in knowledge in general. Epicurus, being the philosopher of the concept, is most exact in this and therefore defines these fundamental conditions in greater detail. He is also the most consistent and, like the Sceptics, he completes ancient philosophy, but from the other side.

“Further we must observe everything both on the basis of sensations and also simply of present impressions, whether of the mind or of any criterion whatever, and equally on the basis of actual feelings, so that we have something by which we can characterise what is to be expected and what is unknown. *Once this is done, one must begin reflections on the unknown.*” p. 31.

“[...] the common opinion of the physicists that nothing comes into being from not-being [...]” Aristotle, *Physics*, Book I, Chap. 4, Commentary of Coimbra [Jesuit] College, p[p]. 123[-125].

“[...] In one sense things come-to-be out of that which has no ‘being’ ... yet in another sense they come-to-be always out of ‘what is’. For coming-to-be necessarily implies the pre-existence of something which potentially ‘is’, but actually ‘is not’; and this something is spoken of both as ‘being’ and as ‘not-being.’” Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, Book I, Chap. 3, Commentary of Coimbra College, p. 26.

[Diogenes Laertius, X, 39] “[...] the universe was always such as it is now, and such it will ever remain.” p. 31.

“[...] the universe consists of bodies and space.” [p. 32.]

“[...] of bodies some are composite, others the elements of which these composite bodies are made.” p. 32.

“These [elements] are *indivisible* and unchangeable ... *if things are not all to be destroyed and pass into non-existence [...]*” [p]p. [32-]33. “[...] the universe is infinite. For what is finite has an extremity [...]” p. 33, “[...] the universe is unlimited by reason of the multitude of bodies and the extent of the void.” p. 33. (“[...] the infinite body will obviously prevail over and annihilate the finite body ....” Aristotle, *Physics*, Book III. Chap. 5, Commentary of Coimbra College, p. 487.)

[Diogenes Laertius, X, 42] “[...] they [the atoms] ...vary indefinitely in their shapes.” p[p]. 33[-34].

“The atoms are in continual motion through all eternity.” p. 34.

“Of all this there is no beginning, since both atoms and void exist from all eternity.” p. 35.

“[...] atoms have no quality at all except shape, size and weight [...]” p. 35. “... “they are not of any and every size; at any rate no atom has ever been seen by our senses.” p. 35. “[...] there is an infinite number of worlds [...]” p. 35. “Again there are impressions which are of the same shape as the solid bodies but far thinner than what we can perceive.” p. 36. “These impressions we call images.” p. 36. “Besides this, ... the production of the images is as quick as thought. For the continual streaming off from the surface of the bodies is *evidenced by no visible sign.*” p. 37.

“*And there are other modes in which these natural Phenomena may be formed. For there is nothing in them which contradicts the sensations if we in some way take into account what is evident in order to refer the impressions produced on us from outside.*” p. 38.

“*But it must also be assumed that when anything streams in from outside, we see and apprehend the shapes.*” p. 38.

“Every presentation *received* either by the mind or through *sensation*, but *not judged (non judicata)*, is *true*. The illusion and *error*, whether it is *not confirmed* or is even *refuted*, always lies in what is *added by thought, following a motion in ourselves which, though connected with a certain effort of presentation, has its own perception, through which the error arises.*” p. 39.

“For there would be no error if we did not experience also a certain other motion in ourselves which is connected [with the effort of presentation], but has its own perception.” p. 39. “It is through this [inner movement which is connected with] the effort of presentation, but has its own perception, that, if it is not confirmed or is refuted, illusion arises; but if it is confirmed or not refuted, truth results.” [p]p. [39-]40.

“Again, hearing takes place when a current passes from the object which emits sounds, etc.” p. 40.

“Also concerning smell we must assume (as I have said about hearing)” p.41.

“Every quality which is inherent in and proper to them (the atoms), meaning those named above (*magnitudo, figura, pondus*), [size, shape, weight] is *unchangeable* just as the atoms also do not change.” p.41.

“Again one should not suppose that there are atoms of every size, lest this be contradicted by phenomena; but some changes in size must be admitted. For if this is so, the processes in feelings and sensations will be more easily explained.” [p]p. [42-]43.

“Besides, one must not suppose that in a limited body there is an infinite number of atoms, and of every size [...]” p. 43.

“[...] one motion must be assumed which must be thought of as directed upwards to infinity, and one directed downwards [...]” p. 45.

See end of page 44 and beginning of page 45, where, strictly speaking, the atomistic principle is violated, and an internal necessity is attributed to the atoms themselves. Since they have a certain size, there must be something smaller than they are. Such are the parts of which they are composed. But these are necessarily to be considered together as a *coinoths enuparcousa*. [permanent community]. Thus ideality is transferred to the atoms themselves. The smallest thing in them is not the smallest imaginable, but is likened to it without anything definite being thought of. The necessity and ideality attributed to them is itself merely fictitious, accidental, external to them. The principle of Epicurean atomistics is not expressed until the ideal and necessary is made to have being only in an imaginary form external to itself, the form of the atom. Such is the extent of Epicurus' consistency.

“When they are travelling through the void and meet with no resistance, the atoms must move with equal speed.” p. 46.

Just as we have seen that necessity, connection, differentiation, within itself, is transferred to or rather expressed in the atom, that ideality is present here only in this form external to itself, so it is with *motion* too, the question of which necessarily arises once the motion of the atoms is compared with the motion of the *Cata tas sugcriseis* [composite] bodies, that is, of the concrete. In comparison with this motion, the motion of the atoms is in principle absolute, that is, all empirical conditions in it are disregarded, it is ideal. In general, in expounding Epicurean philosophy and its immanent dialectics, one has to bear in mind that, while the principle is an imagined one, assuming the form of being in relation to the concrete world, the dialectics, the inner essence of these ontological determinations, as a form, in itself void, of the absolute, can show itself only in such a way that they, being immediate, enter into a necessary confrontation with the concrete world and reveal, in their specific relation to it, that they are only the imagined form of its ideality, external to itself, and not as presupposed, but rather only as ideality of the concrete. Thus its determinations are in themselves untrue and self-negating. The only conception of the world that is expressed is, that its basis is that which has no presuppositions, which is nothing. Epicurean philosophy is important because of the naiveness with which conclusions are expressed without the prejudice of our day.

“And not even when it is a question of composite bodies can one be said to be *faster* than the other, etc.” p. 46. “[...] it can only be said that *they often rebound until the continuity of their movement becomes perceptible to the senses*. For what we conjecture of the invisible, namely, that periods of time contemplated through speculation may also contain continuity of movement, is not true for things of this kind, since only all that which is *really perceived or is comprehended from an impression by thinking is true*.” p.47.

The question must be considered, why the principle of the reliability of the senses is disregarded and what abstracting conception is set up as a criterion of truth.

“[...] the soul is a corporeal thing, composed of fine particles, which is spread (*diffusum*) over the whole of the body (*corpus*) [...]” p. 47.

Interesting here again is the specific difference between fire and air, on the one hand, and the soul, on the other, showing that the soul is adequate to the body, analogy being used and nevertheless discarded, which is in general the method of imaginative consciousness; thus all concrete determinations collapse and a mere monotonous echo takes the place of development.

“Further we must keep in mind that the *soul* is the *chief cause of sensation*. It would not be, if it were not in a manner of speaking *enveloped by the rest of the mass of the body*. *The remaining mass of the body, which makes it possible for the soul to be this cause, itself shares through the soul in this quality* (yet not in all of what the soul possesses). *That is why* it has no longer any sentience when the soul has departed. For it did not *have this ability in itself*, but *served as an intermediary for it to another being which emerged simultaneously with it* and which, owing to the *ability it had achieved to produce immediately a sensation corresponding to the specific stimulation*, imparted sentience both to itself and to the remaining mass of the body by reason of neighbourhood (*vicinia*) and sympathy.” p. 48.

We have seen that the atoms, taken abstractly among themselves, are nothing but entities, imagined in general, and that only in confrontation with the concrete do they develop their ideality, which is imagined and therefore entangled in contradictions. They also show, by becoming one side of the relation, that is, when it comes to dealing with objects which carry in themselves the principle and its concrete world (the living, the animate, the organic), that the realm of imagination is thought of now as free, now as the manifestation of something ideal. This freedom of the imagination is therefore but an assumed, immediate, imagined one, which in its true form is the atomistic. Either of the determinations can therefore be taken for the other, each considered in itself is the same as the other, but in respect of each other too the same determinations must be ascribed to them, from whichever viewpoint they are considered; the solution is therefore the return to the simplest, first determination, where the realm of the imagination is assumed as *free*. As this return takes place in regard to a totality, to what is imagined, which really has the ideal in itself, and is the ideal itself in its being, so here the atom is posited as it really is, in the totality of its contradictions; at the same time, the basis of these contradictions emerges, the desire to apprehend the thing imagined as the free ideal thing as well, while only imagining it. The principle of absolute arbitrariness appears here, therefore, with all its consequences. In its lowest form, this is already essentially the case with the atom. As there are many atoms, each one contains in itself a difference in respect of the many, and hence it is in itself many. But that is already contained in the definition of the atom, so that the plurality in it is necessarily and immanently a oneness; it is so because it is. But it still remains to be explained, with regard to the world, why it develops freely from a single principle into a plurality. Therefore what is to be proved is assumed, the atom itself is what is to be explained. Then the difference of the ideality could be introduced only by comparison; in themselves both sides come

under the same definition, and ideality itself is again posited by the external combination of these many atoms, by their being the principles of these compositions. The principle of this composition is therefore that which initially was composite in itself without any cause, that is, what is explained is itself the explanation, and it is thrust into the nebulous space of imaginative abstraction. As already said, this emerges in its totality only when the organic is considered.

It must be noted that the fact that the soul, etc., perishes, that it owes its existence only to an accidental mixture, expresses in general the *accidental nature of all these notions*, e.g. , soul, etc., which, not being necessary in ordinary consciousness, are *accounted for* by Epicurus as *accidental conditions*, which are seen as something given, the necessity of which, the necessity of the existence of which, is not only not proved, but is even admitted to be not provable, only possible. What persists, on the other hand, is the free being of the imagination, which is firstly the free which itself exists in general, and secondly, as the thought of the freedom of what is imagined, a lie and a fiction, and hence in itself an inconsistency, an illusion, an imposture. It expresses rather the demand for a concrete definition of the soul, etc., as immanent thought. What is lasting and great in Epicurus is that he gives no preference to conditions over notions, and tries just as little to save them. For Epicurus the task of philosophy is to prove that the world and thought are thinkable and possible. His proof and the principle by which it proceeds and to which it is referred is again possibility existing for itself, whose natural expression is the atom and whose intellectual expression is chance and arbitrariness. Closer investigation is needed of how all determinations may be exchanged between soul and body and how either of them is the same as the other in the bad sense that neither one nor the other is at all conceptually defined. See end of page 48 and beginning of page 49: Epicurus stands higher than the Sceptics in that not only are conditions and presentations reduced to nothing, but their perception, the thinking of them and the reasoning about their existence, proceeding from something solid, is likewise only a possibility.

*"It is impossible to conceive anything that is incorporeal as self-existent, except empty space. (The incorporeal is not thought by the imagination, it pictures it as the void and as empty.) And empty space can neither act nor be acted upon, but by virtue of its existence makes motion possible for the bodies."* p. 49. "Hence those who say the soul is incorporeal talk nonsense." [p]p. [49]-50.

It is necessary to study the passage on page 50 and the beginning of page 51, where Epicurus speaks of the determinations of concrete bodies and seems to refute the atomistic principle by saying:

*"... that the whole body in general receives its specific being out of all that; not as though it were a composite of it, as, for instance, when out of conglomerations of atoms themselves a larger formation is made up ... but only that, as stated, it receives its specific being out of all that. And all these things demand specific consideration and judgment, in which the whole must constantly be considered and not in any way be separated, but, apprehended as a whole, receives the designation of body."* pp. 50 and 51.

*"Again, the bodies often encounter non-specific accidentals, some of which, of course, are invisible and incorporeal. Thus, by using this word in the manner in which it is most frequently used, we make it clear that the accidentals neither possess the nature of the whole to which, as the composite whole, we give the name of body, nor that [of the] specific qualities without which a body is unthinkable."* p. 51.

*"[...] we must regard them as that which they appear to be, namely, as accidental attributes of the body which, however, neither are in themselves concomitants of the body nor possess the function*

of an independent being; we see them such as sensation itself makes their individuality appear." p. 52.

It is a matter of certainty for Epicurus that repulsion is posited with the law of the atom, the declination from the straight line. That this is not to be taken in the superficial sense, as though the atoms in their movement could meet only in this way, is expressed at any rate by Lucretius. Soon after saying in the above-quoted passage:

Without this *clinamen atomi* [declination of the atom] there would be neither "*offensus natus, nec plaga creata*" ["meeting nor collision possible"] [II, 223], he says:

"Again, if all movement is always interconnected, the new arising from the old in a determinate order -- if the atoms never swerve so as to originate some new movement that will snap the bonds of fate, the everlasting sequence of cause and effect -- what is the source of the free [will] ...." ([*On the Nature of Things*,] Book II, 251 ff.)

Here another motion by which the atoms can meet is posited, distinct from that caused by the *clinamen*. Further it is defined as absolutely deterministic, hence negation of self, so that every determination finds its being in its immediate being-otherwise, in the being-negated, which in respect of the atom is the straight line. Only from the *clinamen* does the individual motion emerge, the relation which has its determination as the determination of its self and no other.

Lucretius may or may not have derived this idea from Epicurus. That is immaterial. The conclusion from the consideration of repulsion, that the atom as the immediate form of the concept is objectified only in immediate absence of concept, this same is true also of the philosophical consciousness of which this principle is the essence.

This serves me at the same time as justification for giving a quite different account of the matter from that of Epicurus.

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### **Marx's Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy**

#### **Second Notebook**

##### **I. Diogenes Laertius, Book Ten, Commentary by Gassendi**

##### **Epicurus to Herodotus. Continued**

"We must not investigate time as we do the other accidents which we investigate in a subject, namely, by referring them to the preconceptions envisaged in our minds; but we must take into account the plain fact itself, in virtue of which we speak of time as long or short... We must not adopt any new terms as preferable, but should employ the already existing ones; nor must we predicate anything else of time, as if this something had the same essence as the proper meaning of the word; ... but we must chiefly reflect upon how we associate and measure what is peculiar to it." "For this also requires no proof, but only reflection that we associate it with days and nights and their parts and likewise also with feelings and absence of feeling, with movement and rest, conceiving a peculiar

attribute of these to be precisely that which we call time." pp. 52-53 [...] and all things are again dissolved [...]]" p. 53.

"It is clear, then, that he [Epicurus] also makes the words perishable, since their parts are subject to change. He says this also elsewhere." p. 53.

"And further, we must *not suppose that the worlds have necessarily one and the same shape, but that they differ* from one another." p. 53.

"For neither are living things necessarily separated from the infinite, nor have they fallen from heaven.... we must grasp that nature too in many and very different respects follows the instruction and pressure of things, and thinking gives greater precision to that which it receives from nature and adds new discoveries, in some cases more quickly and in others more slowly, requiring for this sometimes more and sometimes less time". [p]p. [53-]54.

See end of page 54 and beginning of page 55, where the arqai twon onomatwn is discussed.

"As for the meteors, we must believe that their motion, position, eclipse, [rising and] setting and the like do not take place because someone governs and orders or has ordered them, who at the same time enjoys perfect bliss."

(we must compare with this what Simplicius attributes to Anaxagoras about the nous which orders the world)

"... along with immortality (for actions and anxieties, anger and favour do not accord with bliss, but result from weakness, fear and need with which they are most related). Nor must we believe that the being which has acquired bliss willingly submits to thwart movements, for this is an annoyance and contradictory [to bliss], but we must rather maintain ail its sublimity by using expressions which lead to such notions as do not give rise to any opinions contradictory to sublimity. If we do not agree with this, this contradiction will itself produce the greatest mental confusion. Hence we must assume that, with the appearance of the world, both the original interception of these conglomerations and the obligatory character and periodicity of the movements appeared." pp. 55 and 56.

Here we must observe the principle of the thinkable in order, on the one hand, to maintain the freedom of self-consciousness, and, on the other hand, to attribute to God freedom from any determination.

"[...] that what makes one blissful in the knowledge of the meteors ... [lies] in particular in accurate study of what those natural phenomena are which are observed in our meteors and what is in some way kindred to them in principle: [Here we have that which can be 'in a plurality of ways'] that which can possibly be and that which is in some other way: but it is rather an absolute rule that nothing which threatens danger, which can disturb ataraxy, can ever happen to an indestructible and blissful nature. Consciousness must apprehend that this is an absolute law." p. 56.

Further, on pages 56 and 57, Epicurus denounces the senseless mere wondering contemplation of the celestial bodies as stultifying and fear-inspiring; he asserts the absolute freedom of mind.

"... We must beware of the "prejudice that the study of those objects is not thorough or subtle enough because it is aimed only at our ataraxy and bliss. Hence we must investigate the meteors and all that is unknown, observing how often the same thing occurs within our experience." p. 57.

"Besides all this we must understand that the greatest confusion in men's minds arises through the belief that there are beings which are blissful and indestructible and that at the same time have

*desires, actions and feelings* which conflict with these attributes and that men somehow foresee eternal suffering and *entertain suspicions of the kind fostered by the myths* (and because in death there is no sensation they also fear to be at some time deprived of sensation) and that they are not guided by the correct notions ... so that, unless they set limits to their fears, they experience equal or still greater anxiety than they would were their imaginings true." "But ataraxy means to have freed oneself from all that..... [p]p. [57-]58.

"Therefore we must pay attention to all things that are present to us and to the sensations, to general ones in relation to what is general, to particular ones in relation to what is particular, and to all the evidence available for every single criterion." p. 58.

### **Epicurus to Pythocles**

Epicurus repeats at the beginning of his discussion on the meteors that the aim of this is gnosews ... ataraxia and pistis bebaia, kaqaper kai tw n loipwn [Knowledge ... ataraxy and firm conviction as is also the case with everything else.] But the study of these celestial bodies also differs substantially from the rest of science:

"...nor must we *apply to everything the same theory* as in Ethics or in clarifying the other problems of Physics, for example that *the universe consists of bodies and the incorporeal*' (quod to kenon [That is, void] — KM) "or that there are *indivisible elements* and the like, where only a *single explanation* corresponds to the phenomenal *For this is not the case with the meteors. These have no simple cause of their coming into being and have more than one essential category corresponding to the sensations.*" pp. 60 and 61.

It is important in the whole of Epicurus' view of things that the celestial bodies, as something beyond the senses, cannot command the same degree of evidence as the rest of the moral and sensuous world. To them Epicurus' theory of *disjunctio* applies in practice, viz.: that there is no *aut aut* [either, or], and hence that internal determinateness is denied and that the principle of the thinkable, the imaginable, of accident, of abstract identity and freedom manifests itself as what it is, as the indeterminate, which precisely for that reason is determined by a reflection external to it. It is seen here that the method of consciousness which imagines and represents, fights only its own shadow; what the shadow is depends on how it is seen, how that which reflects is reflected out of it back into itself. As in the case of the organic in itself, when it is substantialised, the contradiction of the atomistic outlook is revealed, so now, when the object itself assumes the form of sensuous certainty and of imagining reason, philosophising consciousness admits what it is doing. As there the *imagined principle and its application* are found *objectified as one*, and the contradictions are thereby called to arms as the antithesis of the concretised presentations themselves, so here, where the object hangs, as it were, over the heads of men, where through the self-sufficiency, through the sensuous independence and the mysterious remoteness of its existence, the object challenges consciousness, so here consciousness comes to acknowledge its own activity, it contemplates what it does, so as to make the presentations which pre-exist in it intelligible and to vindicate them as its own.. just as the whole activity of consciousness is only struggle with remoteness, which, like a curse, shackles the whole of antiquity, just as it has only possibility, chance, as its principle, and seeks in some way to establish identity between itself and its object, so does it admit this, as soon as this remoteness confronts it in objective independence as heavenly bodies. Consciousness is indifferent as to just what explanation is offered: it affirms that there is not one explanation, but many, that is, that any explanation will suffice; thus it acknowledges that its activity is active fiction. For this reason, in antiquity in general, in whose philosophy premises are not lacking, the meteors and the doctrine concerning them are the image in which, even in the person of Aristotle, it contemplates its own

defects. Epicurus expressed this, and this is the service he rendered, the iron logic of his views and conclusions. The meteors challenge sensuous understanding, but it overcomes their resistance and will listen to nothing but its own ideas of them.

“For nature must be studied not according to empty axioms and laws, but as required by the phenomena.... (life [requires]) us to live without confusion.” p. 61.

Here, where the premise itself confronts actual consciousness, arousing fear in it, there is no longer any need for any principles or premises. The imagination is extinguished in fear.

Epicurus therefore again formulates the following proposition, as though finding himself in it:

“Everything therefore happens, once it is explained consistently in various ways, in conformity with the phenomena, if that which has been *credibly* established in respect of them is maintained. But if we maintain one thing as valid and reject another, although it equally conforms to the phenomena, then we are openly overstepping the bounds of the study of nature and launching into the realm of myth.” p. 61.

The question now is how the explanation is to be arranged:

“Certain signs of the processes of the meteors can be taken from the processes going on in our experience which can be observed or are present in the same way as the phenomena of the meteors. For these can occur in a plurality of ways. But one must observe the appearance of every single thing and also explain whatever is connected with it. This will not be inconsistent with the fact that it can take place in various ways, as happens in our experience.” p. 61.

For Epicurus the sound of his own voice drowns the thunder and blots out the lightning of the heavens of his conception. We can gather from the monotonous repetition how important Epicurus considers his new method of explanation, how intent he is to eliminate the miraculous, how he always insists on applying not one, but several explanations, giving us very frivolous examples. Of this in respect of everything, how he says almost outright that while he leaves nature free, he is concerned only with freedom of consciousness. The only proof required of an explanation is that it should not be *antimartureisqai* [disproved] by the evidence of the senses and experience, by the phenomena, the appearance, for what matters is only how nature appears. These propositions are reiterated.

On the origin of the sun and the moon:

“For this also is suggested in this way by sensation.” p. 63.

On the size of the sun and the constellations:

“[...] the phenomena here [on the earth] we see ... *as we perceive them by the senses.*” p. 63.

On the rising and setting of the constellations:

“For no phenomenon testifies against this.” p. 64.

On the turnings of the sun and the moon:

“For all that and what is connected with it does not contradict any of the evident phenomena if in separate explanations we always hold fast to what is possible and can bring each of them into conformity with the phenomena, without fear of the slavish artifices of the astrologers.” [p]p. [64-165.

On the waning and waxing of the moon:

[...] and *in any of the ways* by which also the phenomena within our experience suggest an explanation of this problem, *unless, being in love with some one means of explanation, we lightly reject the others or are unable to see what it is Possible for a man to know and therefore seek to know what is impossible.*" p. 65.

On the *species vultus* in the moon:

"[...] *in general in any way considered as being in conformity with the phenomena.*" "For, it must be added, *this way must be used in respect of all the meteors. For if you fight against what is evident, you will never be able to enjoy genuine ataraxy.*" P. 66.

Note particularly the exclusion of all divine, teleological influence in the passage on the *ordo periodicus* [periodical order] where it is clearly seen that the explanation is only a matter of consciousness listening to itself and the objective is a delusion simulated:

"... *must be seen as something ordinary* which also occurs *within our own experience*; the *divinity must not on any account be adduced for this, but must be kept free from all tasks and in perfect bliss.* For unless this be done, the whole theory of origins of the meteors will be rendered senseless, as has already been the case with some theoreticians who did not apply a possible explanation, but *indulged in idle attempts at explanations, believing that it happens only in one way and excluding all other possible explanations,* and thus arrived at things which are impossible, and were unable to understand the *phenomena as signs,* which one must do, and were not disposed to rejoice with God." p. 67.

The same arguments are often repeated almost word for word: On the varying lengths of nights and days: on the *mkhk nuktw n kai hmerwn parallattonta*, p. 67.

On the *epishmasiai*, [weather signs] p. 67.

On the origin of the *nefh*, [clouds] p. 68.

Of the *brontai*, [thunder] of the *astrapai*, [lightning] p. 69; thus he says of the *keraunos*. [thunderbolts]

"And there are several other ways in which *thunderbolts* may occur. *Exclusion of myth is the sole condition necessary*; and it will be excluded if one properly attends to the phenomena and hence draws inferences concerning what is invisible." p. 70.

(After adducing many explanations of *seismoi, terrae motus*, [earthquake] he adds as usual: "But there are also *several other ways*", etc., p. 71.)

On the comets:

"... there are many other ways by which this might be brought about if one is capable of finding out what accords with the phenomena." p. 75.

*De stellis fixis et errantibus*: [on fixed and wandering stars]

"To assign a *single cause* for these effects when the phenomena suggest several causes is *madness* and an enormity of those who are obsessed by senseless astrology and assign at random causes for certain phenomena *when they by no means free the divinity from burdensome tasks.*" p. 76.

He even accuses those who simpliciter, aplws [simply, absolutely] discuss such things,

*portentosum quidpiam coram multitudine ostentare affectare* = "that applies to those who wish, to do something to impress the crowd". p. 76.

He says in connection with epishmadii, [weather signs] the anticipation of *tempestas* [tempest] in animals, which some connected with God:

"For such folly as this would not possess *the most ordinary being* if ever so little enlightened, *much less one who enjoys perfect felicity.*" p. 77.

From this we can see among other things how Pierre Gassendi, who wants to rescue divine intervention, assert the immortality of the soul, etc., and still be an Epicurean (see, for example, *esse animos immortal, contra Epicurum*, Pet. Gassendi animadvers. in 1. dec. Diog. Laert., pp. 549-602, or, *esse deum authorem mundi, cant Epicurum*, pp. 706-725, *gene deum hominum curam, contra Episcurum*: 738-751, etc. Compare: Feuerbach, *geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, "Pierre Gassendi"; pp. 127-150), does not understand Epicurus at all and still less can teach us anything about him. Gassendi tries rather to teach us from Epicurus than to teach us about him. Where he violates Epicurus' iron logic, it is in order not to quarrel with his own religious premises. This struggle is significant in Gassendi, as is in general the fact that modern philosophy arises where the old finds its downfall: on the one hand from Descartes' universal doubt, whereas the Sceptics sounded the knell of Greek philosophy; on the other hand from the rational consideration of nature, whereas ancient philosophy is overcome in Epicurus even more thoroughly than in the Sceptics. Antiquity was rooted in nature, in materiality. Its degradation and profanation means in the main the defeat of materiality, of solid life; the modern world is rooted in the spirit and it can be free, can release the other, nature, out of itself. But equally, by contrast, what with the ancients was profanation of nature is with the moderns salvation from the shackles of servile faith, and the modern rational outlook on nature must first raise itself to the point from which the ancient Ionian philosophy, in principle at least, begins—the point of seeing the divine, the Idea, embodied in nature.

Who will not recall here the enthusiastic passage in Aristotle, the acme of ancient philosophy, in his treatise *peri ths fusesw zwikhhs*, [On the Nature of Animals] which sounds quite a different note from the dispassionate monotony of Epicurus.

Characteristic of the method of the Epicurean outlook is the way it deals with the *creation of the world*, a topic in the treatment of which the standpoint of a philosophy will always be ascertainable, since it reveals how, according to this philosophy, the spirit creates the world, the attitude of a philosophy to the world, the creative power, the spirit of a philosophy.

Epicurus says (pp. 61 and 62):

"The world is a *celestial complex* (*perioci tis ouranon*), which comprises stars and earth and all phenomena containing a cut-out segment (*apotomhn*) of the infinite, and *terminating in a boundary* which may be either ethereal or solid (a boundary whose dissolution will bring about the wreck of all within it), which may be at rest, and may be round, triangular or of any other shape. *All these alternatives are possible* since none of them is contradicted by the *phenomena*. Where the world ends cannot be discerned. That there is an *infinite number* of such worlds is evident..."

Anybody will at once be struck by the poverty of this world construction. That the world is a complex of the earth, stars, etc., means nothing, since the origin of the moon, etc., occurs and is explained only later.

In general every concrete body is a complex, or more precisely, according to Epicurus, a complex of atoms. The definition of a complex, its specific distinction, lies in its boundary, and for that reason, once the world is defined as having been cut out from the infinite, it is superfluous to add the boundary as a closer definition, for something which is cut out is separated from the remainder and is a concrete, distinct thing, and therefore bounded in regard to the remainder. But the boundary is what must be defined, since a bounded complex in general is not yet a world. Further on it is said that the boundary can be defined in any way one likes, *pantacws*, and finally it is admitted that it is impossible to define its specific difference, but that it is conceivable that one exists.

Hence all that is said is that the notion of the return of a totality of differences to an indefinite unity, i.e., the notion of a "world"; exists in consciousness, is present in everyday thinking. The boundary, the specific difference, and hence the immanence and necessity of this notion is declared to be not conceivable; that the notion exists can be conceived, tautologically, because it is there; so that what is to be explained, the creation, the origin and internal production of a world by thought, is declared inconceivable, and the existence of this notion in consciousness is passed off as the explanation.

It is the same as if one were to say that it can be proved that there is a God, but his *differentia specifica, quid sit*, [specific distinction, what he is] the what of this determination, cannot be investigated.

When Epicurus further says that the boundary can be conceived as of any kind, i.e., every determination which in general we distinguish in a spatial boundary can be applied to it, then the notion of the world is nothing but the return to sensuously perceptible unity, which is indefinite and therefore may be defined in any way one likes, or more generally, since the world is an indefinite notion of half sensuous, half reflecting consciousness, the world is present in this consciousness together with all other sensuous notions and bounded by them; its definition and boundary is therefore as multiple as these sensuous notions surrounding it, each of them can be regarded as its boundary and hence as its closer definition and explanation. That is the essence of all Epicurean explanations, and it is all the more important because it is the essence of all the explanations of reflecting consciousness which is the prisoner of preconceptions.

So it is also with the moderns in regard to God, when goodness, wisdom, etc., are ascribed to Him. Any one of these notions, which are definite, can be considered as the boundary of the indefinite notion of God which lies between them.

The substance of this kind of explanation is therefore that a notion which is to be explained is found in consciousness. The explanation or closer definition is then that notions in the same sphere and accepted as known stand in relation to it; hence that in general it lies in consciousness, in a definite sphere. Here Epicurus admits the weakness of his own and of all ancient philosophy, namely, that it knows that notions are in consciousness, but that it does not know their boundary, their principle, their necessity.

However, Epicurus is not satisfied with having worked out his conception of the creation; he performs the drama himself, objectives for himself what he has just done, and only then does his creation proper begin. For he says further:

"Such a world may arise ... in one of the intermundia (by which term we mean the spaces between worlds), in a vast empty space ... in a great transparent void ... when certain suitable seeds rush in from a world or an *intermundium* or from several worlds, and gradually form compounds or divisions, or, as may happen, undergo changes of place, and receive into themselves wanderings from without as far as the foundations laid can hold the compound. For if a world arises in the void,

it is not enough that there should be an aggregation or vortex or a multitude and that it should meet with another, as one of the physicists says. For this is in conflict with the phenomena.” [p. 62]

Here, first, worlds are presupposed for the creation of the world, and the place where this occurs is the void. Hence what was foreshadowed to begin with in the concept of creation, viz. that what was to be created is presupposed, is substantiated here. The notion without its closer definition and relation to the others, that is to say, as it is provisionally presupposed, is empty or disembodied, a an *intermundium*, an empty space. How this notion gets its determination is presented as follows: seeds appropriate for the creation of a world combine in the way necessary for the creation of a world, that is, no determination, no difference is given. In other words, we have nothing but the atom and the *kenon*, [void] despite Epicurus himself striving against this, etc. Aristotle has already in a profound manner criticised the superficiality of the method which proceeds from an abstract principle without allowing this principle to negate itself in higher forms. After praising the Pythagoreans because they were the first to free the categories from their substrate, and did not consider them as attributes of the things of which they are predicated, but as the very substance itself:

“They [the Pythagoreans] thought that the finitude and infinity were not *attributes of certain other things*, e.g. of fire or earth, etc., *but were the substance of the things of which they are predicated*”;

he reproaches them because

“*they thought that the first subject of which a given definition was predicable was the substance of the thing [...]*”. [Aristotle,] *Metaphysics*, Book I, Chap. V.

## II. Sextus Empiricus

We now go on to the attitude of the Epicurean philosophy to Scepticism, insofar as it can be gathered from Sextus Empiricus.

But first a basic definition given by Epicurus himself must be cited from Book Ten of Diogenes Laertius contained in the description of the wise man:

“[the wise man] *will be a dogmatist but not a mere sceptic.*” p. 81.

What Epicurus says about his principle of thinkability, and about language and the origin of concepts, makes up an important part of his exposition of his system as a whole, defining its essential attitude towards ancient philosophy and containing *implicate* [implicitly] his position in relation to the Sceptics. It is interesting to see what Sextus Empiricus says about why Epicurus took to philosophy.

“If anybody asks ... *out of what chaos originated*, he will have nothing to answer. And according to *some, this was precisely the reason why Epicurus plunged into philosophising*. For when he was a boy he asked his teacher, who was reading to him. [...] *out of what chaos arose if it arose first*. When the teacher said it was not his business to teach that, but the business of those who were called philosophers, Epicurus said: 'I must go to them if they know the truth of things,'" Sext. Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, Geneva, 1621, p. 383.

“For Democritus says that 'Man is that which we all know', etc. For this thinker proceeds to say that *only the atoms and the void truly exist, and these, he says, form the substrate not only of living beings, but of all compound bodies, so that, as far as their are concerned, we shall not form a concept of the particular essence of Man, seeing that they are common to all things*. But besides these there is no existing substrate; so that we shall possess no means whereby we shall be able to distinguish Man from the other living beings and *form a clear conception* of him. Again, Epicurus says that Man

is such and such a shape combined with a soul. According to him, then, since Man is shown by pointing out he that is not pointed out is not a man and, if anyone points out a female, the male will not be Man, while if the female points out a male, she will not be Man." *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* p. 56.

"For besides Pythagoras also Empedocles and the Ionians, besides Socrates also Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, and perhaps also the Garden philosophers, 182 concede that God exists, *as the speeches made by Epicurus testify.*" *Against the Professors*, p. 320.

"For it cannot be assumed that the souls are carried down below.... They are *not* dissolved, when *separated from the bodies*, as Epicurus used to say, like smoke. For before also it was not the body which held them fast, but they themselves were for the body the reason why it held together, but still more for themselves." *Against the Professors*, p. 321.

"And Epicurus, according to some, concedes the essence of God as far as the multitude is concerned, but *by no means as concerns the nature of things.*" *Against the Professors*, p. 319.

"The Epicureans [...] did not know that if *that which is pointed out is Man* that which is not pointed out is not Man. And further such pointing out takes place either in respect of a man ... flat-nosed or aquiline-nosed, long-haired or curly-haired, or in respect of *other distinctive features.*" *Against the Professors*, p. 187.

"... amongst them we must place Epicurus, although he seems to be hostile to the professors of science." *Against the Professors*, p. 11.

"*Since, according to the sage Epicurus, it is not possible either to inquire or to doubt without a preconception*, it will be well first of all to consider what 'grammar' is *Against the Professors*, p. 12.

"... but we shall find even the *accusers of grammar*, Pyrrho and Epicurus, acknowledging its necessity. Epicurus has been detected as guilty of having filched the best of his dogmas from the poets. For he has been shown to have taken his proposition that the intensity of pleasure is 'the removal of everything painful'-from this one verse:

"When they had now put aside all longing for drinking and eating.'

"And as to death, that it is nothing to us', Epicharmus had pointed this out to him when he said:

"To die or to be dead concerns me not.'

"So too, he stole the notion that dead bodies have no feeling from Homer, where he writes:

.... Tis dumb clay that he beats with abuse in his violent fury.'" *Against the Professors*, p. 54.

"Side by side with him,"

(Archelaus of Athens, who divides philosophy into to fusikon kai hqikon [physics and ethics])

"they place Epicurus as one who also rejects logical consideration. But there were others who said that *he did not reject logic in general, but only that of the Stoics.*" *Against the Professors*, p. 140.

"But the Epicureans proceed from logic: for they investigate first the Canonics and create for themselves the doctrine of the visible and the concealed and the appearances which accompany them." *Against the Professors*, p. 142.

*"Opposition to the representatives of science seems to be common to the Epicureans and the followers of Pyrrho, though not from the same standpoint; the Epicureans hold that the sciences contribute nothing to the perfecting of wisdom"*

(this means that the Epicureans consider the knowledge of things, as another form of existence of the spirit, to be powerless in raising the reality of the spirit; the Pyrrhonists consider the powerlessness of the spirit to comprehend things as its essential aspect, its real activity. There is a similar relation between the dogmatists and the Kantians in their attitude to philosophy, although both sides appear degenerate and deprived of the freshness of ancient philosophy. The former renounce knowledge out of godliness, that is, they believe with the Epicureans that the divine in man is ignorance, that this divine, which is laziness, is disturbed by understanding. The Kantians, on the contrary, are as it were the appointed priests of ignorance, their daily business is to tell their beads over their own powerlessness and the power of things. The Epicureans are more consistent: if ignorance is inherent in the spirit, then knowledge is no enhancement of the spiritual nature, but something indifferent to the spirit, and for an ignorant man the divine is not the motion of knowledge, but laziness);

"Or, as some conjecture, because they see in this a way of covering up their ignorance. For in many matters Epicurus stands convicted of ignorance, and even in ordinary converse his speech was not always correct." *Against the Professors*, P. 1.

After quoting some more gossip which clearly proves his confusion, Sextus Empiricus defines the difference between the Sceptics' attitude to science and that of the Epicureans as follows:

"The followers of Pyrrho [opposed the sciences] *neither because they did not contribute anything to wisdom, for that assertion would be dogmatic*, nor because they were uneducated.... They had the same attitude to the sciences as to the whole of *philosophy*."

(From this it is evident that one must distinguish between *maqhmata* [science] and *filosophia* [philosophy] and that Epicurus' contempt for *maqhmata* extends to what we call knowledge, and how exactly this assertion *suo systemati omni consentit*. [corresponds to his whole system])

"For just as they approached philosophy with the desire of attaining truth, but, *when faced with an anomaly of things resembling contradiction suspended judgment* so also, when they set about mastering the sciences and tried also to attain the truth contained in them, they found equal difficulties, which they did not conceal." p. 6 *Against the Professors*, Book I].

In the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book I, Chap. XVII, the aetiology which Epicurus in particular applied is aptly refuted, in such a way, however, that the Sceptics' own impotence is revealed.

"Possibly, too, the Five Modes of suspension of judgment may suffice as against the aetiologies. For either a person will suggest a cause which accords with all the trends of philosophy and of scepticism and with the phenomena, or he will not. And perhaps it is impossible to assign a cause which accords with all these."

(Of course, to assign such a cause which is nothing else at all but a phenomenon, is impossible because the cause is the ideality of the phenomenon, the transcended phenomenon. just as little can [the assignment of] a cause accord with Scepticism, because Scepticism is professional opposition to all thought, the negation of determination itself. It is naive to confine scepticism to *fainomena* [phenomena], for the phenomenon is the being-lost, the not-being of thought: scepticism is the same not-being of thought as reflected in itself, but the phenomenon has in itself

disappeared, it is only a semblance; scepticism is the speaking phenomenon and disappears as the phenomenon disappears, it is also only a phenomenon.)

“For all things, whether apparent or non-evident, are matters of controversy. But if there is controversy, the cause of this cause will also be asked for”

(that is, the Sceptic wants a cause which itself is only a semblance and therefore no cause).

“And if he assumes an apparent cause for an apparent, and a non-evident for a non-evident, he will be lost in the regress ad infinitum” [*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book I],

(that is, because the Sceptic refuses to get away from the semblance and wants to hold on to it as such, he cannot get away from the semblance and this manoeuvre can be carried on into infinity; it is true that Epicurus wishes to go on from the atom to further determinations, but as he will not allow the atom as such to be dissolved, he cannot go beyond atomistics, determinations external to themselves and arbitrary; the Sceptic, on the other hand, accepts all determinations, but in the determinateness of semblance; his activity is therefore just as arbitrary and displays everywhere the same inadequacy. He swims, to be sure, in the whole wealth of the world, but remains in the same poverty and is himself an embodiment of the powerlessness which he sees in things; Epicurus makes the world empty from the start and so he ends up with the completely indeterminate, the void resting in itself, the otiose god).

“And if at any point he makes a stand, either he will state that the cause is valid in respect of the previous admission, introducing the relating-to-something while he negates the relating-to-nature,”

(it is precisely in the semblance, in the appearance, that the *pros ti* [relating to something] is the *pros thn fusin* [relating to nature]);

“or if he accepts something out of a presupposition, he will be stopped.” p. 36 [*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*].

As the meteors, the *visible heaven*, are for the ancient philosophers the symbol and the visible confirmation of their prejudice for the substantial, so that even Aristotle takes the stars for gods, or at least brings them into direct connection with the highest energy, so the *written heaven* the *sealed word* of the god who has been revealed to himself in the course of world history, is the battle-cry of Christian philosophy. The premise of the ancients is the act of nature, that of the moderns the act of the spirit. The struggle of the ancients could only end by the visible heaven, the substantial nexus of life, the force of gravity of political and religious life being shattered, for nature must be split in two for the spirit to be one in itself. The Greeks broke it up with the Hephaestan hammer of art, broke it up in their statues; the Roman plunged his sword into its heart and the peoples died, but modern philosophy unseals the word, lets it pass away in smoke in the holy fire of the spirit, and as fighter of the spirit fighting the spirit, not as a solitary apostate fallen from the gravity of Nature, it is universally active and melts the forms which prevent the universal from breaking forth.

### **III. Plutarch, that Epicurus Actually Makes A Pleasant Life Impossible**

It goes without saying that very little of this treatise by Plutarch is of any use. One need only read the introduction with its clumsy boastfulness and its crude interpretation of the Epicurean philosophy in order no longer to entertain any doubt about Plutarch's utter incompetence in philosophical criticism.

Although he may agree with the view of Metrodorus:

“They [the Epicureans] believe that the supreme good is found in the belly and all other passages of the flesh through which pleasure and non-pain make their entrance, and that all the notable and brilliant inventions of civilisation were devised for this belly-centred pleasure and for the good expectation of this pleasure [.... ]” p. 1087,

this is *minime* [least of all] Epicurus' teaching. Even Sextus Empiricus sees the difference between Epicurus and the Cyrenaic school in that he asserts that *voluptas* [pleasure] is *voluptas animi*. [pleasure of the soul]

“Epicurus asserts that in illness the sage often actually laughs at the paroxysms of the disease. Then how can men for whom the pains of the body are so slight and easy to bear find anything appreciable in its pleasures?” p. 1088.

It is clear that Plutarch does not understand Epicurus' consistency. For Epicurus the highest pleasure is freedom from pain, from diversity, the absence of any dependence; the body which depends on no other for its sensation, which does not feel this diversity, is healthy, positive. This position, which achieves its highest form in Epicurus' otiose god, is of itself like a chronic sickness in which the disease, because of its duration, ceases to be a condition, becomes, as it were, familiar and normal. We have seen in Epicurus' philosophy of nature that he strives after this absence of dependence, this removal of diversity in theory as well as in practice. The greatest good for Epicurus is ataraxia [ataraxy] since the spirit, which is the thing in question, is empirically unique. Plutarch revels in commonplaces, he argues like an apprentice.

Incidentally we can speak of the conception of the *sofos*, [wise man] who is a preoccupation equally of the Epicurean, Stoic and Sceptic philosophies. If we study him we shall find that he belongs most logically to the atomistic philosophy of Epicurus and that, viewed from this standpoint too, the downfall of ancient philosophy is presented in complete objectiveness in Epicurus.

Ancient philosophy seeks to comprehend the wise man, o *sofos*, in two ways, but both of them have the same root.

What appears theoretically in the account given of matter, appears practically in the definition of the *sofos*. Greek philosophy begins with seven wise men, among whom is the Ionian philosopher of nature Thales, and it ends with the attempt to portray the wise man conceptually. The beginning and the end, but no less the centre, the middle, is one *sofos*, namely Socrates. It is no more an accident that philosophy gravitates round these substantial individuals, than that the political downfall of Greece takes place at the time when Alexander loses his wisdom in Babylon.

Since the soul of Greek life and the Greek mind is substance, which first appears in them as free substance, the knowledge of this substance occurs in independent beings, individuals, who, being notable, on the one hand, each has his being in *external* contrast to the others, and whose knowledge, on the other hand, is the inward life of substance and thus something internal to the conditions of the reality surrounding them. The Greek philosopher is a demiurge, his world is a different one from that which flowers in the natural sun of the substantial.

The first wise men are only the vessels, the Pythia, from which the substance resounds in general, simple precepts; their language is as yet only that of the substance become vocal, the simple forces of moral life which are revealed. Hence they are in part also active leaders in political life, lawgivers.

The Ionian philosophers of nature are just as much isolated phenomena as the forms of the natural element appear under which they seek to apprehend the universe. The Pythagoreans organise an inner life for themselves)within the state; the form in which they realise their knowledge of

substance is halfway between a completely conscious isolation not observed among the Ionians, whose isolation is rather the undeliberate, naive isolation of elementary existences, and the trustful carrying on of life within a moral order. The form of their life is itself substantial, political, but maintained abstract, reduced to a minimum in extent and natural fundamentals, just as their principle, number, stands midway between colourful sensuousness and the ideal. The Eleatics, as the first discoverers of the ideal forms of substance, who themselves still apprehend the inwardness of substance in a purely internal and abstract, intensive manner, are the passionately enthusiastic prophetic heralds of the breaking dawn. Bathed in simple light, they turn away indignantly from the people and from the gods of antiquity. But in the case of Anaxagoras the people themselves turn to the gods of antiquity in opposition to the isolated wise man and declare him to be such, expelling him from their midst. In modern times (cf., for example, Ritter, *Geschichte der alien Philosophie*, Bd. I [1829, pp. 300 ff.]) Anaxagoras has been accused of dualism. Aristotle says in the first book of the *Metaphysics* that he uses the nous [reason] like a machine and only resorts to it when he runs out of natural explanations. But this apparent dualism is on the one hand that very same dualistic element which begins to split the heart of the state in the time of Anaxagoras, and on the other hand it must be understood more profoundly. The nous is active and is resorted to where there is no natural determination. It is itself the *non ens* [Not-being] of the natural, the ideality. And then the activity of this ideality intervenes only when physical sight fails the philosopher, that is, the nous is the *philosopher's* own nous, and is resorted to when he is no longer able to objectify his activity. Thus the subjective nous appeared as the essence of the wandering scholar [c.f. Goethe] and, in its power as ideality of real determination, it appears on the one hand in the Sophists and on the other in Socrates.

If the first Greek wise men are the real spirit, the embodied knowledge of substance, if their utterances preserve just as much genuine intensity as substance itself, if, as substance is increasingly idealised, the bearers of its progress assert an ideal life in their particular reality in opposition to the reality of manifested substance, of the real life of the people, then the ideality itself is only in the form of substance. There is no undermining of the living powers; the most ideal men of this period, the Pythagoreans and the Eleatics, extol state life as real reason; their principles are objective, a power which is superior to themselves, which they herald in a semi-mystical fashion, in poetic enthusiasm; that is, in a form which raises natural energy to ideality and does not consume it, but processes it and leaves it intact in the determination of the natural. This embodiment of the ideal substance occurs in the philosophers themselves who herald it., not only is its expression plastically poetic, its reality is this person, whose reality is its own appearance; they themselves are living images, living works of art which the people sees rising out of itself in plastic greatness; while their activity, as in the case of the first wise men, shapes the universal, their utterances are the really assertive substance, the laws.

Hence these wise men are just as little like ordinary people as the statues of the Olympic gods; the motion is rest in self, their relation to the people is the same objectivity as their relation to substance. The oracles of the Delphic Apollo were divine truth for the people, veiled in the chiaroscuro of an unknown power, only as long as the genuine evident power of the Greek spirit sounded from the Pythian tripod; the people had a theoretical attitude towards them only as long as they were the resounding theory of the people itself, they were of the people only as long as they were unlike them. The same with these wise men. But with the Sophists and Socrates, and by virtue of *dunamis* [potentialities] in Anaxagoras, the situation was reversed. Now it is ideality itself which, in its immediate form, the *subjective spirit*, becomes the principle of philosophy. In the earlier Greek wise men there was revealed the ideal form of the substance, its identity, in distinction to the many-coloured raiment woven from the individualities of various peoples that displayed its manifest

reality. Consequently, these wise men on the one hand apprehend the absolute only in the most one-sided, most general ontological definitions, and on the other hand, themselves represent in reality the appearance of the substance enclosed in itself. While they hold themselves aloof from the pollai, [multitude] and express the mystery of the spirit, on the other hand, like the plastic gods in the market places, in their blissful self-contemplation, they are the genuine embellishment of the people, to which as individuals they return. It is now, on the contrary, ideality itself, pure abstraction which has come to be for itself, that faces the substance; subjectivity, which establishes itself as the principle of philosophy. Not of the people, this subjectivity, confronting the substantial powers of the people, is yet of the people, that is, it confronts reality externally, is in practice entangled in it, and its existence is motion. These mobile vessels of development are the Sophists. Their innermost form, cleansed from the immediate dross of appearance, is Socrates, whom the Delphic oracle called the sofwtaton. [wisest]

Being confronted by its own ideality, substance is split up into a mass of accidental limited existences and institutions whose right — unity, and identity with it — has escaped into the subjective spirit. The subjective spirit itself is as such the vessel of substance, but because this ideality is opposed to reality, it is present in minds objectively as a “must”; and subjectively as a striving. The expression-of this subjective spirit, which knows that it has the ideality in itself, is the judgment of the concept, for which the criterion of the individual is that which is determined in itself, the purpose, the good, but which is still here a “must” of reality. This “must” of reality is likewise a “must” of the subject which has become conscious of this ideality, for it itself stands rooted in reality and the reality outside it is its own. Thus the position of this subject is just as much determined as its fate.

First, the fact that this ideality of substance has entered the subjective spirit, has fallen away from itself, is a leap, a falling away from the substantial life determined in the substantial life itself. Hence this determination of the subject is for it an accomplished fact, an alien force, the bearer of which it finds itself to be, the daemon of Socrates. The daemon is the immediate appearance of the fact that for Greek life philosophy is just as much only internal as only external. The characteristics of the daemon determine the empirical singularity of the subject, because the subject naturally detaches itself from the substantial, and hence naturally determined, life in this [Greek] life, since the daemon appears as a natural determinant. The Sophists themselves are these daemons, not yet differentiated from their actions. Socrates is conscious that he carries the daemon in himself. Socrates is the substantial exemplar of substance losing itself in the subject. He is therefore just as much a substantial individual as the earlier philosophers, but after the manner of subjectivity, not enclosed in himself, not an image of the gods, but a human one, pot mysterious, but clear and luminous, not a seer, but :a sociable man.

The second determination is therefore that this subject pronounces a judgment on the “must”; the purpose. Substance has lost its ideality in the subjective spirit, which thus has become in itself the determination of substance, its predicate, while substance itself has become in relation to the subjective spirit only the immediate, unjustified, merely existing composite of independent existences. The determination of the predicate, since it refers to something existing, is hence itself immediate, and since this something is the living spirit of the people, it is in practice the determination of the individual spirits, education and teaching. The “must” of substantiality is the subjective spirit's own determination expressed by it; the purpose of the world is therefore its [the spirit's] own purpose, to teach about it is its calling. It therefore embodies in itself the purpose and hence the good both in its life and in its teaching. It is the wise man as he has entered into practical motion.

Finally, inasmuch as this individual pronounces the judgment of the concept on the world, he is in himself divided and judged; for while he has his roots for one part in the substantial, he owes his right to exist only to the laws of the state to which he belongs, to its religion, in brief, to all the substantial conditions which appear to him as his own nature. On the other hand, he possesses in himself the purpose which is the judge of that substantiality. His own substantiality is therefore judged in this individual himself and thus he perishes precisely because he is born of the substantial, and not of the free spirit which endures and overcomes all contradictions and which need not recognise any natural conditions as such.

The reason why Socrates is so important is that the relation of Greek philosophy to the Greek spirit, and therefore its inner limit, is expressed in him. It is self-evident how stupid was the comparison drawn in recent times between the relation of Hegelian philosophy to life and the case of Socrates, from which the justification for condemning the Hegelian philosophy was deduced. The specific failing of Greek philosophy is precisely that it stands related only to the substantial spirit; in our time both sides are spirit and both want to be acknowledged as such.

Subjectivity is manifested in its immediate bearer [Socrates] as his life and his practical activity, as a form by which he leads single individuals out of the determinations of substantiality to determination in themselves; apart from this practical activity, his philosophy has no other content than the abstract determination of the good. His philosophy is his transference from substantially existing notions, differences, etc., to determination-in-self, which, however, has no other content than to be the vessel of this dissolving reflection; his philosophy is therefore essentially his own *wisdom*, his own *goodness*; in relation to the world the only fulfilment of his teaching on the good is a quite different subjectivity from that of Kant when he establishes his categorical imperative. For Kant it is of no account what attitude he, as an empirical subject, adopts towards this imperative.

With Plato motion becomes ideal; as Socrates is the image and teacher of the world, so Plato's ideas,, his philosophical abstraction, are its prototypes.

In Plato this abstract determination of the good, of the purpose, develops into a comprehensive, world-embracing philosophy. The purpose, as the determination in itself, the real will of the philosopher, is thinking, the real determinations of this good are the immanent thoughts. The real will of the philosopher, the ideality active in him, is the real "must" of the real world. Plato sees this his attitude to reality in such a way that an independent realm of ideas hovers over reality (and this "beyond" is the philosopher's own subjectivity) and is obscurely reflected in it. If Socrates discovered only the name of the ideality which has passed out of substance into the subject, and was himself consciously this motion, the substantial world of reality now enters really idealised into Plato's consciousness, but thereby this ideal world itself is just as simply organised in itself as is the really substantial world facing it of which Aristotle most aptly remarked:

(*Metaphysics*, I, Chap. IX) "For the Forms are practically equal to-or not fewer than-the things, in trying to explain which these thinkers proceeded from them to the Form".

The determination of this world and its organisation in itself is therefore to the philosopher himself a beyond, the motion has been removed from this world.

"Yet when the Forms exist, still the things that share in them do not come into being, unless there is something to originate movement [...]." Aristotle, *op. cit.*

The philosopher as such, that is, as the wise man, not as the motion of the real spirit in general, is therefore the truth-beyond of the substantial world facing him. Plato expresses this most precisely

when he says that either the philosophers must become kings or the kings philosophers for the state to achieve its purpose. In his attempts to educate a tyrant he also made a practical effort on these lines. His state has indeed as its special and highest estate that of the learned. [Plato, *Res publica*, V, 473.]

I wish to mention here two other remarks made by Aristotle, because they provide the most important conclusions concerning the form of Platonic consciousness and link up with the aspect from which we consider it in relation to the *sofos*.

Aristotle says of Plato:

“In the *Phaedo* the case is stated in this way — that the Forms are causes both of being and of becoming; yet when the Forms exist, still the things that share in them do not come into being, unless there is something to originate movement ].” Aristotle, *op. cit.*

It is not only that which is, it is the whole possibility of being that Plato wants to bring out into ideality: this ideality is a closed, specifically different realm in the philosophising consciousness itself: because it is this, it lacks motion.

This contradiction in the philosophising consciousness must objectify itself to the latter, the philosophising consciousness must eject this contradiction.

“Again the Forms are patterns not only of sensible things, but of Forms themselves also: e.g. the genus, as genus of Forms; so that the same thing could be both pattern and copy.” [*op. cit.*]

Lucretius on the ancient Ionian philosophers:

“... have certainly made many excellent and divine discoveries and uttered oracles from the inner sanctuary of their hearts with more sanctity and far surer reason than those the Delphic prophetess pronounces, drugged by the laurel fumes from Apollo's tripod.” Book I, 11. 736-740.

Important for the definition of the Epicurean philosophy of nature is the following:

**1.** The *eternity of matter*, which is connected with the fact that time is considered as an accident of accidents, as proper only to composites and their *eventis*, and hence is relegated to outside the material principle, outside the atom itself. It is further connected with the fact that the substance of the Epicurean philosophy is that which reflects only externally, which has no premises, which is arbitrariness and accident. Time is rather the fate of nature, of the finite. Negative unity with itself, its internal necessity.

**2.** The void, the negation, is not the negative of matter itself, but [space] where there is no matter. In this respect too, therefore, matter is in itself eternal.

The form which we see emerge at the conclusion from the workshop of Greek philosophical consciousness, out of the darkness of abstraction, and veiled in its dark garb, is the same form in which Greek philosophy walked, alive, the stage of the world, the same form which saw gods even in the burning hearth, the same which drank the poison cup, the same which, as the God of Aristotle, enjoys the greatest bliss, theory.

## Marx's Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy

### Third Notebook

#### Plutarch, 1. That Epicurus actually makes a Pleasant Life Impossible.

"[...] as a *common end for it* (pleasure) Epicurus has set the *removal of all pain*. For he believes that our nature adds to pleasure only up to the point where pain disappears and *does not allow it to increase any further* (although the pleasure, when *the state of painlessness is not reached* admits of certain unessential variations). But to proceed to this point, accompanied by desire, is our stint of pleasure, and the journey is indeed short and quick. Hence it is that becoming aware of the poverty here they [the Epicureans] *transfer their final good from the body, as from an unproductive piece of land, to the soul.*" p. 1088.

"[... ] do you not hold that the gentlemen [the Epicureans] do well to begin with the body, where [pleasure] first appears, and then pass to the soul as having more stability and bring the whole to consummation in it?"

The answer to this is that the transition is correct, but

"When you hear their loud protest that the soul is so constituted as to find joy and tranquillity in nothing in the world but pleasure of the body either present or anticipated, and that this is its good, do they not appear to you to be using the soul as a funnel of the body, through which they pour pleasure, like wine, from a worthless and leaky vessel into another and leave it to age there in the belief that they are turning it into something more respectable and precious?" p. 1088.

Here too, Plutarch fails to understand the logic of Epicurus; it is important to note anyhow that he does not see a specific transition from the *voluptas corporis ad voluptatem animi* [Pleasure of the body to pleasure of the soul], and Epicurus' attitude in this respect should be more closely defined.

"... the soul takes up the memory ... but retains nothing else .. and the memory of it [pleasure] is obscure..... p. 1088.

"Observe the greater moderation of the Cyrenaics, though they have tumbled from the same jug as Epicurus: they even think it wrong to indulge in sexual commerce when there is a light, and instead provide for a cover of darkness, so that the mind may not, by receiving the images of the act in full clarity through the sense of sight, too often rekindle the desire.... the other set ... hold that the superiority of the sage lies above all in this, in vividly remembering and keeping intact in himself the sights and feelings and movements associated with Pleasure, ... thus recommending a practice unworthy of the name of wisdom by allowing the slops of pleasure to remain in the soul of the sage as in the house of a wastrel." p. 1089.

"For it betrays a violent and brutish longing for present and anticipated enjoyments, when the soul revels with such bacchanalian attachment to recollection." p. 1089.

"It is this, I believe, that has driven them, seeing for themselves the absurdities to which they were reduced, to take refuge in the 'painlessness' and the 'stable condition of the flesh'...; for the 'stable and settled condition of the flesh' and the 'trustworthy expectation' of this condition contain, they say, the highest and the most assured delight for men who are able to reflect. Now first observe their conduct here, how they keep decanting this 'pleasure' or 'painlessness' or 'stable condition' of theirs back and forth, from body to soul and then once more from soul to body, compelled, since they cannot retain volatile pleasure, to begin again from the beginning, and though they lay the pleasure

of the body as he says at the base of the delight of the soul, they again let the delight pass through anticipation into pleasure.” p. 1089.

This remark is of importance for the Epicurean dialectics of pleasure, although it is wrongly criticised by Plutarch. According to Epicurus, the wise man himself is in this vacillating condition which appears to be the determination of *hdonh*. [pleasure] Only God is *makariotos*, [bliss] the pure rest of nothingness in itself, the complete absence of all determination; this is why he has his abode not inside the world like the wise man, but outside it.

“For whereas a ‘stable condition of the flesh’ occurs frequently enough, no certain and firm expectation where the flesh is concerned can arise in a reasonable mind.” p. 1090.

Plutarch criticises Epicurus on the grounds that because of the possibility of pain there can be no freedom in a healthy present. But in the first place the Epicurean spirit is not one which concerns itself with such possibilities, but because absolute relativity, the accidental nature of [every] relationship, is in itself only unrelatedness, the Epicurean wise man takes his condition as unrelated, and as such it is for him a stable one. Time is for him only the accident of accidents; how could its shadow penetrate into the solid phalanx of *ataraxia* [ataraxy]? But if he postulates that the immediate premise of the individual spirit, namely the body, should be healthy, this is only [postulated] to bring back home to the spirit its own unrelatedness, its inborn nature, that is [by postulating] a healthy body not externally differentiated [from the individual spirit]. If, when one is suffering, this real nature of his hovers before him in the guise of fantasies and hopes of individual conditions in which that characteristic condition of his spirit would be realised, that only means that the individual as such contemplates his ideal subjectivity in an individual way — a completely correct observation. For Epicurus, Plutarch’s objection means simply that the freedom of the spirit is not present in a healthy body because it is present; for it is superfluous to remove the possibility outside precisely because reality is determined only as a possibility, as chance. If on the other hand the matter is regarded in its universality, then it is precisely a renunciation of universality if the true positive condition is to be obscured by accidental details; this simply means that dwelling in the free ether one thinks of particular mixtures, of the exhalations of poisonous plants, of the inhalations of tiny living things, this means to renounce life because one is liable to die, etc.; it means not to allow oneself the enjoyment of the universal but to fall out of it into particularities. Such a frame of mine concerns itself only with the very smallest things, it is so meticulous that it fails to see anything. Finally, if Plutarch says one must take care to maintain the health of the body, Epicurus also repeats that same platitude, but with more genius: he who perceives the universal condition as the true one takes the best care to maintain it. That is human common sense. It believes it has the right to counterpose to the philosophers its most foolish trivialities and commonplaces as a *sierra incognita*. It thinks itself a Columbus when it stands eggs on end. Apart from his system (for this is his right, *summum jusa* [supreme right]) Epicurus is on the whole correct when he says the wise man considers illness as a non-being, but the semblance disappears. If therefore he is ill, that is to him a disappearance which does not endure; if he is healthy, in his essential condition, the semblance does not exist for him and he has other things to do than to think that it could exist. If he is ill, he does not believe in the illness; if he is healthy, he acts as though this were the condition to which he is entitled, that is, he acts as a healthy person. How lamentable in comparison with this resolute, healthy individual is a Plutarch, who recalls Aeschylus, Euripides, and even Doctor Hippocrates merely in order not to rejoice in health!

Health, as the condition of being identical with oneself, is forgotten of itself, there is no reason to busy oneself with the body; this differentiation begins only with illness.

Epicurus desires no eternal life: how much less can it matter to him that the next instant may conceal some misfortune.

Just as wrong is the following criticism made by Plutarch:

“Criminals and transgressors of the law, they say, pass their entire lives in misery and apprehension, since even though they may succeed in escaping detection, they can have no assurance of doing so; in consequence fear for the future lies heavy on them and precludes any delight or confidence in their present situation. In these words, without knowing it, they have also spoken against themselves: we can often enjoy in the body a stable condition’, that is, health, but there is no way to acquire any assurance that it will last. Hence they cannot but be constantly anxious and worded for the body in facing the future.” p. 1090.

In actual fact it is just the contrary of what Plutarch says. Only when the individual violates them do the laws and general customs begin to be premises for him, he sets himself against them, and his escape from this state of tension would only lie in *pistis*, [trust] which, however, is not guaranteed by anything.

In general, the interesting thing in Epicurus is that in every sphere he eliminates the condition by which the premise as such is provoked to appear and he considers as normal the condition in which the premise is concealed. In general, it is nowhere a question of the mere *sarx*. [body, flesh] Punitive justice is a direct manifestation of inner connection, mute necessity, and Epicurus eliminates both its category from logic and the semblance of its reality from the wise man’s life. The accidental fact, on the contrary, that the just man suffers, is an external relation and does not wrest him out of his unrelatedness.

Hence it can be seen how wrong is the following criticism made by Plutarch:

“To do no wrong does nothing to bring assurance; it is not suffering deservedly, but suffering at all that is dreaded.” p. 1090.

What Plutarch means is that Epicurus must reason in that way according to his principles. It does not occur to him that Epicurus may have other principles than those which he, Plutarch, attributes to him.

“For the nature of the flesh possesses in *itself* the raw material of diseases, and as in the jesting proverb we speak of getting the whip from the ox’s hide, so it gets the pains from the body, and suffices to make life precarious and full of fears for wicked and honest men alike, once they have been taught to let their delight and trust depend on the body and on expectation for the body and on nothing else, as *Epicurus teaches in his treatise ‘On the Highest Goods’ and in many other passages as well.*” pp. 1090-1091.

“Inasmuch as their [the Epicureans’] good is an escape from ills, and they say that no other can be conceived, and indeed that nature has no place at all in which to put its good except the place left when evil is expelled [...]” p. 1091.

“*Epicurus too makes a similar statement to the effect that the good is a thing that arises out of your very escape from evil* and more and from your memory and reflection and jubilation that this has happened to you. His words are these: ‘For what produces a jubilation unsurpassed is the contrast of the *great* evil escaped; and this is the nature of good, if you apply your mind rightly and then stand firm and do not indulge in meaningless prating about good.’” P. 1091.

“Shame!” exclaims Plutarch here.

“Therefore in this they are no whit inferior to swine.... Actually, for the cleverer and more graceful animals the escape from evil is not the end. ... since once they have escaped evil they instinctively seek out the good, or better, let us say that they reject everything painful or alien as an impediment to the pursuit of the real, better kernel of their nature.” (For what is necessary is not good\*, what is worth seeking and choosing lies beyond the escape from evil .... ) p. 1091.

Plutarch thinks himself very wise when he says that besides the necessity of flying from evil, the animal seeks the good, the good that lies beyond the escape. Its animal nature lies precisely in the fact that the animal seeks something good over-beyond. According to Epicurus, no good for man lies outside himself; the only good which he has in relation to the world is the negative motion to be free of it.

That all this is understood individually in Epicurus follows from the principle of his philosophy, which he formulates with all its consequences; Plutarch’s syncretic senseless argumentation cannot measure up to this.

“For even if an itching of the skin or a rheumy flux in the eye is unpleasant, it does not follow that scratching the skin and wiping the eye are anything special; nor does it follow that if pain, fear of the gods and anxiety about what awaits one in Hades are evil, escape from them is enviable bliss [...].” p. 1091. “No; these men coop up their *delight in quarters* that are *small* and cramped ... advancing beyond the usual stupid notions and taking as the final goal of wisdom that which, it would appear, is naturally present in irrational beasts. For if it makes no difference in the freedom of the body from pain whether it has got free by itself or through nature, so too in ataraxy it is of no importance whether the unperturbed condition is achieved by the soul or through nature.... For likewise these gentlemen will be seen to be no better off than the brutes in this matter of not being disturbed by what awaits them in Hades or by tales about the gods and of not anticipating endless anxiety or pain [pp. 1091-1092.]

(\* on this point Aristotle has quite different views; he teaches in the *Metaphysics* that necessity rules free men more than it does slaves)- *Note by Marx.*

“...Epicurus himself ... says, ‘If we were not troubled with misgivings about meteors and again with fear of death and pain, we should never have stood in need of natural philosophy.’” p. 1092.

“... since, however, the aim of their theology is to have no fear of God, but instead to be rid of anxieties, I should think that this condition’ is more securely in the possession of creatures that have no faintest notion of God than of those who have been taught to think of him as injuring no one. For they [the animals] have not been delivered from superstition, since they have never even been its victims; nor have they put aside the notion of the gods that is disturbing, but have never even adopted it. The same is to be said of things in Hades.” p. 1092.

“[...] misgiving and dread of what comes after death is less the portion of those who have no preconception of death than of those who still have to conceive that death is no concern of ours. Death is a concern of these men to the extent that they reason about it and subject it to inquiry; but the brutes are relieved of any concern whatever for what is nothing to them, and when they avoid blows and wounds and being killed, they fear only that in death which the Epicureans fear as well.” p. 1092.

That the Epicureans are said to demand that mathematics should be shunned. Plutarch, op. cit., p. 1094D.

“... in admiration and most hearty commendation of one Apelles they write that from the beginning he held aloof from mathematics and thus kept himself unspotted.” loc. cit.

Likewise history, etc., cf. Sext. Empiricus. Plutarch considers as a great fault of Metrodorus that the latter writes:

“[...] so if you must admit that you do not even know on which side Hector fought, or the opening lines of Homer’s poem, or again what comes between, do not be dismayed.” loc. cit.

“[...] Epicurus ... says ... that the wise man is a lover of spectacles and yields to none in the enjoyment of musical and theatrical shows; but on the other hand he allows no place, even over the wine, for questions about music and the philological enquiries of critics”, etc. p. 1095.

“Why, the Epicureans themselves assert that it is more pleasant to confer a benefit than to receive one.” p. 1097.

These antoi [themselves] are precisely those *qui in haeresim Epicuri illapsi*. [who have fallen into the heresy of Epicurus]

“But Epicurus himself allowed that some pleasures come from fame.” p. 1099.

[...] more worthy of consideration than the above-quoted shallow moral objections of Plutarch is his polemic against the Epicurean theology, not that polemic as such, but because it is revealed how ordinary consciousness, adopting, on the whole, the Epicurean standpoint, shies only before the obvious philosophical conclusion. Here one must always bear in mind that Epicurus is concerned neither with *voluptas* [pleasure] nor with sensuous certainty, nor with anything else except the freedom of the mind and its freedom from determination. Therefore we shall go through Plutarch’s considerations one by one.

“One point, that of the pleasure they derive from these views, has, I should say, been dealt with [by Epicurus]: where their theory is fortunate and successful, it *does remove fear* and superstition in a way; but it *gives no joy or favour of the gods*. Instead it *puts us in the same ~ of mind in relation to the gods, of neither being alarmed nor rejoicing*’ (i.e., being unrelated), “that we have in relation to Hyrcanian fishes, from which we expect neither good nor evil. But if we are to add anything to what has already been said, I think we can take this from them themselves: first, they disagree with those who would do away with grief and tears and lamentations at the death of friends, and say that an absence of grief extending to complete insensibility stems from another, greater evil: callousness or unrestrained ambition and infatuation. Hence they say that it is better to be moved somewhat and to grieve and to melt into tears and fret and manifest other sentiments which make one appear soft-hearted and affectionate. For this is what Epicurus said in many other passages..... [p.] p. [1100-1110].

Plutarch does not understand the fear of God at all in the sense that Epicurus does; he does not grasp how philosophical consciousness wishes to free itself from it. The ordinary man is not aware of this. Plutarch therefore quotes trivial empirical examples showing how little terror this belief has for people at large.

In contrast to Epicurus, Plutarch first considers the belief of the polloi [multitude] in God and says that with the multitude this habit of mind indeed takes the form of fear; to be precise, sensuous fear is the only form in which he can grasp the anguish of the free spirit in face of a personal almighty being which absorbs freedom in itself and is, therefore, exclusive. He says:

1. Those who fear him (God): "If they fear him as a ruler gracious to the good and hostile to the wicked, they are freed by this one fear from doing wrong and do not need many redeemers, and since they let evil die down within themselves, in all calm, they are less tormented than those who make use of it and behave impudently but suddenly experience anxiety and regret." p. 1101.

And so by this sensuous fear they are protected against evil, as though this immanent fear were not evil. What is then the essence of the empirically evil? That the individual shuts himself off from his eternal nature in his empirical nature; but is that not the same as to shut his eternal nature out of himself, to apprehend it in the form of persistent, isolation in self, in the form of the empirical, and hence to consider it as an empirical god outside self? Or must the stress be laid on the form of the relation? Then God is punitive in relation to the evil, lenient in relation to the good; and the evil here is what is evil to the empirical individual, and the good what is good to the empirical individual, for otherwise whence would this fear and this hope come, since the individual is concerned with what is evil and what is good for him? In this relation God is merely what is common to all the consequences that empirical evil actions can have. So does the empirical individual refrain from doing evil out of fear lest from the good which he achieves by evil actions a greater evil will result and a greater good will be forfeited, that is to say, in order that the continuity of his well-being will not be broken by the immanent possibility of being snatched out of that continuity?

Is that not the same thing as Epicurus teaches in plain words: do not act unjustly, so as not to go in continual fear of being punished? This immanent relation of the individual to his ataraxia [ataraxy] is therefore presented as a relationship to a god existing outside the individual, but again having no other content than this ataraxia, which is here continuity of well-being. Fear of the future, that condition of insecurity, is here inserted into the remote consciousness of God, considered as a condition which pre-exists in him, but also as a mere threat, and therefore precisely as in individual consciousness.

2. Plutarch says that this striving towards God also procures *voluptus*. [pleasure]

"No, wherever it believes and conceives most firmly that God is present, there more than anywhere else it puts away all feelings of pain, fear, and worry, and gives itself up so far to pleasure that it indulges in a playful and merry inebriation in amatory matters..... p. 1101.

He goes on to say that old men, women, merchants, and kings rejoice in religious feast days....

"For it is not the abundance of wine or the attraction of the meats that cheer the heart at festivals, but good hope and the belief in the benign presence of God and his gracious acceptance of what is done." p. 1102.

There is need for closer study of how Plutarch describes this rejoicing, this *voluptas*.

First he says that the soul is most free from sorrow, fear and anxiety when God is present. So the presence of God is defined as freedom of the soul from fear, sorrow and anxiety. This freedom is manifested in exuberant rejoicing, for this is the individual soul's positive manifestation of this its condition.

Further: the accidental difference of the individual situation disappears where this pleasure exists. And thus the individual is freed from his other determinations and in this rejoicing the individual as such is determined, and this is a substantial determination. Finally, the pleasure is not in the separate enjoyment, but in the certainty that God is not something separate, but that his content is to rejoice over this pleasure of the individual, to look down benevolently on it, and hence to be himself in the determination of the rejoicing individual. Therefore what is deified and celebrated here is the deified

individuality as such, freed from its customary bonds, therefore the *sofos* [wise man] of Epicurus with his *ataraxia* [ataraxy] God is worshipped not as non-present God, but as the present pleasure of the individual. This God has no further determination. Yes, the true form in which this freedom of the individual emerges here is enjoyment, and indeed individual, sensuous enjoyment, the enjoyment which is not disturbed. 'Alcapa.Ct' therefore hovers overhead as the general consciousness, but it manifests itself as the sensuous *voluptas* of Epicurus, except that what is here a living isolated condition is there total consciousness of life, and that for this reason the individual manifestation in Epicurus is more indifferent [to external conditions], more animated by its soul, by *ataraxia*, while in Plutarch this element is more lost in individuality and both are directly blended, and therefore are directly separate. Such is the pitiful outcome of the differentiation of the divine which Plutarch asserts in his polemic against Epicurus. And, to make another remark, if Plutarch says that kings do not enjoy their *publicis convivis et viscerationibus* [Public feasts and entertainments] so much as the sacrificial meals, this means nothing else than that in the first case enjoyment is considered as something human, accidental, and in the second as divine, that individual enjoyment is considered as divine, which is precisely Epicurean.

From this relation of the *ponhroi* [bad] and the *polloi* [multitude] to God Plutarch distinguishes the relation of the *beltion anqrwpwn kai qeajilestaton genos*. [Best men and most agreeable to God] We shall see what point he wins here against Epicurus.

Plutarch says:

"... what great pleasures they have through their pure notions about God, who for them is the guide to all blessings, the father of everything honourable, and may no more do than suffer anything base. For he is good, and in none that is good arises envy about aught or fear or anger or hatred; for it is as much the function of heat to chill instead of warm as it is of good to harm. By its nature anger is infinitely far removed from favour, wrath from goodwill, and from love of man and kindness, hostility and a forbidding disposition; for the one to belong to virtue and power, the other to weakness and vice. Hence the deity cannot have in itself anger and favour together; rather, because it is God's nature to bestow favour and lend aid, it is not his nature to be angry and to do harm." p. 1102.

The philosophical meaning of the proposition that God is the *hgemwn agaqwn* [Master-principle of all good] and the father *pantawn kalwn* [Of all that is beautiful] is that this is not a predicate of God, but that the idea of good is the divine itself. But according to Plutarch a quite different result follows. Good is taken in the strictest opposition to evil, for the former is a manifestation of virtue and of power, the latter of weakness, privation and badness. Judgment, difference, is therefore removed out of God, and this is precisely a basic principle with Epicurus, who is therefore quite consistent when he finds this absence of difference in man theoretically as well as practically in his immediate identity, in sensuousness, whereas in God he finds it in pure *otium*. The God who is determined as good by removal of judgment is the void, for every determination carries in it an aspect which it receives in contrast to others and encloses in itself, and hence reveals in opposition and contradiction its *orgh* [wrath] its *misos* [hatred] its *jobos* [fear] to renounce itself. Plutarch therefore gives the same determination as Epicurus, but only as an image, as imagination, which the latter calls by its conceptual name and does away with the human image.

There is therefore a false ring to the question:

"Do you think that those who deny providence require any further punishment, and are not adequately punished when they deprive themselves of so great a pleasure and delight?" [pp. 1102-1103.]

For it must be affirmed, on the contrary, that he experiences more pleasure in the contemplation of the divine who sees it as pure bliss in itself, without any notionless anthropomorphic relations, than he who does the opposite. It is already in itself bliss to have the thought of pure bliss, however abstractly it be apprehended, as we can see from the Indian holy men. Besides, Plutarch has abolished *prōnōta* [providence] by opposing evil, difference, to God. His further descriptions are purely notionless and syncretic, and besides, he shows in everything that he is concerned only with the individual, not with God. That is why Epicurus is so honest as not to make God bother about the individual.

The internal dialectics of Plutarch's thinking thus necessarily leads him back to speak about the individual soul instead of about the divinity, and he arrives at the *logos peri juchōs* [Consideration on the soul]. Of Epicurus he says:

"Consequently it (the soul) is overjoyed at receiving this most sapient and godlike doctrine that for it the *end of suffering* means *ruin, destruction and being, nothing.*" p. 1103.

One must not let oneself be misled by Plutarch's unctuous words. We shall see how he negates each one of his determinations. Already the artificial means of escape *to kakōs prattein peras* [the end of suffering] and then in contrast *apolesqai* [ruin] and *jqarhnai* [destruction] and *mhdēn einai* [being nothing], show where the centre of gravity is, how thin one side is and the other three times stronger.

The study is divided again into that of the attitudes of, first-, the *twōn adikōn kai pōnhrōn*, [Unjust and the wicked], then the *pollōn kai idiōtōn*, [Many and the uneducated] and finally the *epieikōn kai nous econtōn* [Decent and the reasonable ] (p. 1104) to the doctrine of the continued existence of the soul. Already this division into hard and fast qualitative differences shows how little Plutarch understands Epicurus, who, as a philosopher, considers the position of the human soul in general; and if, despite its determination as transient, here *main* sure of *hdonh* [pleasure] Plutarch should have seen that every philosopher involuntarily extols a *hdonh* which is alien to him in his limitation. Fear is again adduced as a means of improvement for the unjust. We have already dealt with this point. For in fear, and indeed an inner, unextinguishable fear, man is determined as animal, and it is absolutely indifferent to the animal how it is kept in check. If a philosopher does not find it outrageous to consider man as an animal, he cannot be made to understand anything.

"The great majority, free from fear of what happens in Hades, have a myth-inspired expectation of eternal life; and the love of being, the oldest and most powerful of all our passions, provides pleasure and bliss overcoming that childish terror." p. 1104. "Indeed, when men have lost children, a wife, or friends, *they would rather have them exist somewhere in hardship and survive than be utterly taken away and destroyed and reduced to nothing*; and they like to hear such expressions used of the *dying* as 'he is *leaving us*' or '*going to dwell elsewhere*' and all that represent death as a *change of residence of the soul* but not as *destruction*..... p. 1104.

"Such expressions as '*it is the end*' and '*he has perished*' and '*he is no more*' disturb them.... but they are dealt the *finishing blow* by those who say: *We men are born but once; there is no second time...*' Indeed, by discounting the present moment as a minute fraction, or rather as nothing at all, in comparison with all time, men let it pass without enjoying it. They neglect virtue and action and despise themselves as creatures of a day, impermanent and born for no high end." [p. 1104.] "*For being without sensation and dissolved and the doctrine that what has no sensation is nothing to us does not remove the terror of death, but rather confirm it by adding what amounts to proof. For this is the very thing our nature dreads: ... the dissolution of the soul into what has neither thought nor*

*feeling; and Epicurus, by making the dissolution a scattering into emptiness and atoms, does still more to root out our hope of immortality, for which, I had almost said, all men and all women are ready to be torn to pieces by Cerberus and carry water to the leaky urn, if only they may still continue to be and not to be blotted out.”* p. 1105.

We now come to the view of the polloi [multitude] although it becomes apparent in the end that there are not many who do not share it and that, indeed, all, *dew legein pantas*, [Without any exaggeration, all] swear allegiance to this banner.

Actually there is no qualitative difference from the preceding stage, but what appeared in the form of animal fear appears here in the form of human fear, the form of feeling. The content remains the same.

We are told that the desire to be is the oldest love; of course, the most abstract and therefore the oldest love is love of self, love of one's own particular being. But actually that would be to formulate the matter too bluntly, it is taken back again and surrounded with an ennobling radiance by the appearance of feeling. So he who loses wife and children wishes that they should be *somewhere*, even if *things are bad* with them, rather than that they should have completely ceased to be. Simply as a matter of love, the wife and the child of the individual as such are cherished deeply and faithfully in his heart — a much higher form of being than empirical existence. But the matter stands in a different way.

Wife and child in empirical existence are merely wife and child, insofar as the individual himself exists empirically. The fact that he wants to be assured that they are somewhere, in spatial sensuousness, even if things are bad with them, rather than that they do not exist at all, means nothing more than that the individual wishes to be conscious of his own empirical existence. The cloak of love was only a shadow; the naked empirical ego, self-love, the oldest love is the kernel, and it has not been rejuvenated into any more concrete, more ideal form. Plutarch is of the opinion that the name of change sounds more pleasant than that of completely ceasing to exist. But the change must not be a qualitative one; the individual ego in its individual being must persist; the name is therefore only the sensuous presentation of that which it is, and is meant to signify the opposite. It is therefore a lying fiction. The thing must not be changed, but only put in a dark place, the interposition of fantastic remoteness is only intended to conceal the qualitative leap — and every qualitative difference is a leap, without which there is no ideality.

Plutarch is further of the opinion that this consciousness of finiteness makes one weak and inactive, [generates] dissatisfaction with the present life; only it is not life that passes away, but merely this individual being. If this individual being considers itself as excluded from this persisting universal life, can it become richer and fuller by maintaining its tininess for an eternity? Does this relation change, or does it not rather remain ossified in its lifelessness? Is it not the same whether it finds itself in this indifferent relation to life today or whether this lasts hundreds of thousands of years?

Finally Plutarch says outright that it is not the content, the form, that matters, but the being of the individual. To be, even though torn to pieces by Cerberus. What is then the content of his teaching on immortality? That the individual, abstracted from the quality which gives him here his individual position, persists not as the being of a content, but as the atomistic form of being; is that not the same as what Epicurus says, namely, that the individual soul becomes dissolved and returns into the form of the atoms? To ascribe feeling to these atoms as such, even though it is granted that the content of this feeling is indifferent, is but an illogical fantasy. Plutarch therefore teaches the Epicurean doctrine in his polemic against Epicurus: but he does not forget always to present the mh

einai Non-being] as the most fearful thing. This pure being-for-self is the atom. If in general the individual is assured of immortality not in his content, which, insofar as it is general, exists in itself in general, and, insofar as it is form, eternally individualises itself, if as individual being he is assured of immortality, then the concrete differentiation of the being-for-self ceases to exist, for the differentiation does not mean that the individual continues to exist, but that the eternal persists, unlike the transient, and all that this comes to is the assertion that the atom as such is eternal and that the animate returns to this its basic form.

Epicurus carries his teaching on immortality thus far, but he is philosophical and consistent enough to call it by its name, to say that the animate returns to the atomistic form. No compromise helps here. If some concrete differentiation of the individual must disappear, as is shown by life itself, then all those differentiations must disappear which are not in themselves universal and eternal. If the individual must nevertheless be indifferent to this metabolism, [change] then there remains only this atomistic husk of the former content; that is the teaching on the eternity of the atoms.

To whom eternity is as time  
And time as eternity,  
He from all strife  
Is free,

says Jacobus Bohemus.

“Hence in abolishing belief in immortality they [the Epicureans] also abolish the sweetest and greatest hopes of the multitude.” p. 1105.

If therefore Plutarch says that with immortality Epicurus takes away the sweetest hopes of the multitude, he would have been far more correct if he had said what he says meaning something else, he “does not remove [the terror of death] but rather explains it.” [p. 1105.]

Epicurus does not negate this view, he explains it, he expresses it as a concept.

We now come to the class of the *epieikwn* and *nous econtwn*. [Decent and reasonable] Needless to say, it by no means takes us any further than the preceding, but what at first appeared as animal fear, then as human fear, as anxious suspiration, as reluctance to give up atomistic being, now appears in the form of arrogance, of demand, of entitlement. Hence this class, as Plutarch describes it, departs most of all from reason. The lowest class puts forward no claims; the second weeps and will put up with anything to save the atomistic being; the third is the philistine who exclaims, “my God, that would be too much, that such a clever, honest fellow should have to go to the devil!”

“What then do we believe about the hopes of the good, whose lives have been pious and upright and who anticipate in the other world not evil, but the most beautiful and godly gifts? For in the first place, just as the athletes do not receive a wreath without a contest, but only when they have contested and won, so it is not to be wondered at, that those *believe that the reward for victory in life will be conferred on the good only after life* are intent on virtue; these hopes include also that of seeing at last the *deserved punishment of those who in their wealth and power are injurious and insolent now and in their folly laugh to scorn those who are better than they*. In the next place, no one longing for truth and the vision of reality has ever been able to find full satisfaction in this world.... Hence I regard death as a great and perfect blessing since only in that other world will the soul live its real life, whereas [here] it does not truly live, but is as in a dream.” p. 1105.

So these good and clever men expect the reward for life after life; but how inconsistent it is, in that case, to expect life again as a reward for life, since for them the reward for life is something qualitatively different from life. This qualitative difference is again clothed in fiction, life is not raised to any higher sphere, but transferred to another place. They only pretend to despise life, they are not concerned with anything better, they only clothe their hope in a demand.

They despise life, but [for them] their atomistic existence is the good thing in that life and they covet the eternity of their atomistic being, which is the good. If to them the whole of life seemed a spectre, something bad, whence their consciousness of being good? Only from knowledge of themselves as atomistic being, and Plutarch goes so far as to say that they are not satisfied with that consciousness, that because the empirical individual exists only insofar as he is seen by another, these good men rejoice now because after death those who until then despised them will truly see them as good and will have to recognise them and be punished because they did not previously consider them to be good. What a demand! The bad must recognise them in life as good and they themselves do not recognise the universal powers of life as good! Is that not the pride of the atom screwed up to the highest pitch?

Is that not saying, in plain language how arrogant and self-conceited the *e* is made and how eternal the *and being-for-self* is made when it has content! It is of no avail to conceal this with phrases, to say that nobody can satisfy his curiosity in this respect.

This demand does not express anything else than that the general must exist in the form of the individual as [individual] consciousness, and that this demand is eternally fulfilled by the general. But inasmuch as it is demanded that it should be present in this empirical, exclusive being-for-self, it means nothing but that it is a question not of the general, but of the atom.

So we see how Plutarch, in his polemic against Epicurus, says the same thing as Epicurus at every step; but Epicurus develops the conclusions simply, abstractly, truly and plainly and knows what he is talking about, whereas Plutarch everywhere says something else than what he means to say and at bottom also means something else than what he says.

That is in general the relationship of common consciousness to philosophical consciousness.

## **2. Plutarch, Colotes, Xylander Edition**

“Colotes, my dear Saturninus, whom Epicurus used to call affectionately his ‘Colly’ and ‘Collikins’, brought out a book entitled *On the Point that Conformity to the Doctrines of the Other Philosophers Actually Makes It Impossible to Live.*” p. 1107.

If in the preceding dialogue Plutarch tried to prove to Epicurus *quod non beate vivi possi* [That it is not possible to live happily] according to his, Epicurus’, philosophy, now he tries to vindicate the dogmata [doctrines] of the other philosophers against this objection on the part of the Epicureans. We shall see whether he succeeds better with this task than with the preceding one, in which the polemic can in effect be called a panegyric in favour of Epicurus. This dialogue has an important bearing on Epicurus’ relationship to the other philosophers. Colotes makes a good joke when he offers Socrates hay instead of bread and asks him why he does not put his food in his ear, but in his mouth. Socrates occupied himself with very trivial matters, this being a necessary consequence of his historical position.

“Leonteus ... writes ... that Democritus was honoured by Epicurus for having embraced the true *teaching* before him, and ... because he had first *discovered the principles of nature.*” p. 1108.

“... the man who asserts that the majority are deceived in supposing that what heats is heating and what cools is cooling [is himself deceived] if he does not believe that from what he asserts it follows that nothing is of one nature more than of another.” p. 1110.

Plutarch feels an itch every time Epicurus' philosophical logic breaks through to the front. The philistine is of the opinion that whoever argues that the cold is not cold and the warm is not warm, relying on the way such things are judged by the multitude in accordance with their sensations, deceives himself when he fails to assert that neither the one nor the other exists. Our learned friend does not realise that the differentiation is thus merely transferred from the object to consciousness. If one wishes to solve this dialectic of sensuous certitude in itself, one must admit that the attribute is in the combination, in the relation of sensuous knowledge to the sensuous, and as this relation is directly differentiated, so must the attribute also be directly differentiated. Thus the error will not be ascribed either to the object or to knowledge, but the whole of sensuous certainty will be considered as this fluctuating process. He who has not the dialectical power to negate this sphere as a whole, he who wishes to let it remain, must also be satisfied with the truth as it is present within this sphere. Plutarch is too incompetent a gentleman to do the former, and too honest and clever to do the latter

“... so that of every quality we can truly say, 'It no more is than is not'; for to those affected in a certain way the thing is, but to those not so affected it is not.” p. 1110.

So, Plutarch says, one would have to say of every property that it no more is than is not, for it changes according to the way one is affected. His question alone suffices to show that he does not understand the matter. He speaks of a fixed being or non-being as a predicate. But the being of the sensuous consists rather in not being such a predicate, in not being a fixed being or non-being. When I separate these in this way, I separate precisely that which is not separated in sensuousness. Ordinary thinking always has ready abstract predicates which it separates from the subject. All philosophers have made the predicates themselves into subjects.

#### **a) Epicurus and Democritus**

“He [Colotes] says that Democritus' words '*colour is by convention*, sweet by convention, a compound by convention, ... [what is real is the void] and the atoms' are in conflict with our senses, and that anyone who abides by this reasoning and applies it *is not capable of reflecting whether he is [dead] or alive.*” “Against this proposition I have nothing to object, but I must say that this is *as inseparable from Epicurus' doctrine* as shape and weight are by their own [the Epicureans'] assertion inseparable from the atom. *For what does Democritus say? That entities infinite in number, indivisible and different, destitute moreover of quality and of perception, move scattered about in the void; that when they draw near one another or collide or become entangled the resulting aggregate appears in the one case to be water, in others fire, a plant, or a man, but that everything really is atoms, 'ideas', as he calls them, and nothing else. For there is no generation from the nonexistent and again nothing can be generated from the existent, as the atoms owing to their solidity can be neither affected nor changed. From this it follows that no colour comes from the colourless, and no nature or mind from things without qualities.... Democritus is therefore to be censured not for admitting the consequences which flow from his principles, but for setting up principles that lead to these consequences. For he should not have posited immutable first elements; but having posited them, he should have observed that the generation of any quality become impossible and denied it although he had noted it. But Epicurus is quite unreasonable when he says that he lays down the same first principles, but does not say that 'colour is by convention' and so the other qualities. If this is the case with 'not-saying, does he not then admit that he is following his usual practice; for he does away with providence and says he has left piety; he entertains friendship*

*for the sake of pleasure, and says that he is ready to assume the greatest pains for friends; and he posits an infinite universe but does not eliminate 'up' and down'.*" [pp. 1110-1111].

*"What then? Did not Plato too and Aristotle and Xenocrates find themselves producing gold from something not gold ... and everything else from four simple and primary bodies?' ... But in their view the first principles combine at the outset to generate every thing and bring with them their inherent qualities as no inconsiderable provision; and when they have combined, and wet has come together with dry, cold with hot, and so on, bodies which interact on each other and change throughout, then by another mixture they bring into being another product. But the atom stands alone and is destitute of any generative power, and when it collides with another owing to its hardness and resistance it undergoes a shock, but it neither suffers nor causes any further effect. Rather the atoms receive and inflict blows for all time, and are unable to produce a living thing or mind or natural being or even to produce out of themselves a common mass or a single heap in their constant colliding and scattering."* p. 1111.

## **b) Epicurus and Empedocles**

"But Colotes... fastens in turn on Empedocles, ... who writes:

This too I'll tell thee:

No nature is there of a mortal thing

Nor any curst fatality of death.

Mixture alone there is and dissolution

Of things commingled, and men call them nature." p. 1111.

"I for one do not see to what extent it is in conflict with life to assume that there can be neither generation of the non-existent nor destruction of the existent, but that 'generation' is a name given to the conjunction of certain existents with one another, and 'death' a name given to their separation. That he used 'nature' in the sense of generation Empedocles has indicated by opposing death to it. But if those who say that generation is a mixing and death a dissolution do not and cannot live, what else do they [the Epicureans] do? Yet when *Empedocles cements and joins the e together by the operation of heat softness, etc.*, he somehow *opens the way* for them to a 'mixture' that *coalesces into a natural unity*; whereas those [i.e., the Epicureans] *who herd together unchangeable and unresponsive atoms produce nothing out of them, but cause an uninterrupted series of collisions among the atoms*. For an entanglement that is supposed to prevent dissolution produces rather an intensification of the collisions, so that what they call generation is neither mixture nor cohesion, but *confusion and conflict*.... so that nothing, not even an inanimate body, is produced out of them; while perception, mind, intelligence and thought cannot so much as be conceived, even with the best of will, as arising among void and atoms, things which *taken separately have no quality* and which on meeting are not thereby affected or changed; indeed their meeting or fusion produces neither mixture nor coalescence, but only shocks and rebounds. *Thus by such doctrines life and the existence of living things are made impossible*, since they are based on principles which are void, impassive, godless, and moreover incapable of mixture or fusion." "Then how can they claim to leave room for a thing's nature, for a soul, for a living being? As they do for an oath, for prayer, for sacrifice, for worship ... *in words, by affirmation, by pretending, by naming things while by their principles and their doctrines they do away with all this. So by 'nature' they merely mean a thing that naturally is, and by 'generation' a thing generated*, just as something wooden is commonly called 'wood' and what harmonises 'harmony'." [p]p. [1111-]1112.

“Why (says Colotes, *scilicet adversus* Empoclem) [To wit, to Empedocles]) do we wear ourselves out, toiling for ourselves and seeking certain things and avoiding others? For neither do we exist nor live in association with others. ‘Why never fear,’ one might say, ‘my dear little Colotes; no one keeps you from taking care of yourself when he teaches that Colotes’ nature is nothing but Colotes himself or from attending to affairs (affairs for you and your company being pleasures) when he points out that there is no nature of cakes or odours or intercourse, but that there are cakes and perfumes and women.’ No more does the grammarian, who says that ‘Heracles’ strength’ is Heracles himself [, deny the existence of Heracles],. nor do those who declare that accords and rafters are mere forms of speech deny the existence of sounds and rafters.....

‘When Epicurus says, ‘the nature of existing things is bodies and void’, do we take him to mean that ‘nature’ is distinct from ‘existing things’, or simply to indicate ‘existing things’ and nothing more, just as it is his habit for instance to use the expression ‘the nature of void’ for ‘void’ and, by Zeus, ‘the nature of the universe’ for ‘the universe’? p. 1112.

“What else, then, has Empedocles done when he teaches that nature is not distinct from that which is generated nor death from what dies?” p. 1112.

Empedocles is quoted:

“When what is mixed [comes] to the light of day As man or as a beast or plant or bird, [Men say] ‘tis born; but call the parts disjoined Unhappy fate.’

Though Colotes cites these lines himself, he fails to see that Empedocles did not abolish men, beasts, etc., by saying they are produced by the mixture of the elements — but rather, when he showed how wrong those are who call this combination and separation ‘nature’, ‘unhappy fate’ and ‘lurid death’, he did not wish to abolish the use of the current expressions for them.” [p. 1113.]

“Fools! For they have no thoughts that range afar

Who look for birth of what was not before  
Or for a thing to die and wholly perish.’

These are the words of one who says in ringing tones for all who have ears to hear that he does not abolish generation, but only generation from the non-existent; nor abolish destruction, but only out and out destruction, that is, the destruction that reduces to non-existence.” [p. 1113]

“No sage in his prophetic soul would say  
That, while men live (this thing they call their ‘life’),  
So long they are, and suffer good and ill;  
But both before the joining of their frame,  
And once it is disjoined, why, they are nothing.’

For these are not the words of one who denies the existence of men who have been born and are living, but rather of one who takes both the unborn and the already dead to exist.” [p. 1113]

“[...] but [Colotes] says that in Empedocles’ view we shall never so much as fall ill or receive a wound. But how can one who says that before life and after life each person suffers ‘good and ill’, leave no suffering to the living? Who is it, Colotes, that really find themselves impervious to wounds and disease? You yourselves, compacted of atom and void, neither of which has any sensation. Not this is objectionable, but that there is nothing to give you pleasure either, since your atom does not receive the causes of pleasure and your void does not respond to them.” p. 1113.

### c) Epicurus and Parmenides.

“Yet I do not see how, by saying that ‘the universe is one’, he has made it impossible for us to live. So Epicurus too, when he says that ‘the universe’ is infinite, ungenerated and imperishable, and subject neither to increase nor diminution, speaks of the universe as of some one thing. When he premises at the beginning of his treatise that ‘the nature of things is atoms and void’, he treats that nature as one, dividing it into two parts, one of them actually nothing, but termed by you and your company intangible’, ‘empty’, and ‘bodiless’. So that for you too the universe is one.... Observe right here the sort of first principles you people premise for generation: infinity and the void — the void incapable of action, incapable of being acted upon, bodiless; the infinite disordered, irrational, elusive, disrupting and confounding itself because of a multiplicity that defies control or limitation. Parmenides, for one, has abolished neither ‘fire’ nor ‘water’ ... nor ‘cities lying in Europe and Asia’ (in Colotes’ words).... But before all others and even before Socrates he saw that nature has in it something that we apprehend by opinion, and again something that we apprehend by the intellect...” [pp 1113-1114]

“... what belongs to the world of the intellect ... is  
'Entire, unmoving and unborn',  
to quote his own words, and is always like itself and enduring in what it is [p. 1114.]

“Colotes says outright that Parmenides makes a clean sweep of all things by affirming that the universe is one.” [p. 1114.]

“... the world of the intellect ... which he calls ‘being’ because it is eternal and imperishable, and ‘one’ because it is uniform with itself and admits of no variation; while he puts what belongs to the world of the senses under the head of disordered and moving nature.” [p. 1114.] “‘Here most persuasive truth...’ which deals with what is thought and forever unalterably the same, and there ... man’s beliefs, that lack all true persuasion’,

because they deal with objects admitting all manner of changes, accidents, and irregularities.” p. 1114.

“Thus the contention that being is one was no denial of the plural and perceptible, but an indication of its distinction from what is thought.” p. 1114.

### d) Epicurus and Plato

A proof of Plutarch’s unphilosophical manner of thinking is provided by the following passage on Aristotle:

“As for the *ideas* for which he (Colotes') denounces Plato, Aristotle, who everywhere assails them and brings up against them every sort of objection in his treatises on ethics and on physics and in his popular dialogues, *was held by some to be more contentious than philosophical in his attitude to this doctrine and bent on undermining Plato’s philosophy....* p. 1115.

“[...] but he [Colotes], who has not a grain of wisdom, took ‘man is not’ to be one and the same as ‘man is non-existent’. But in Plato’s view there is a world of *difference between ‘is not’ and ‘is non-existent, for by the former is meant the denial of any kind of being*, by the latter the otherness of the partaken and what it partakes in that later philosophers brought under the head of a mere difference of genus and species, and *went no higher* because they became involved in greater problems of logic.”

(Yet another passage from which one can see the immanent, self-satisfied *stupidity beati Plutarchi*. [of blessed Plutarch])

“The relation of the partaken in to the partaker is that of cause to matter, model to copy, power to effect.” p. 1115.

If Plutarch says about Plato’s doctrine of ideas,

“... he does not deny the sensuous, but asserts that what is thought has being”, p. 1116,

it is because the stupid eclectic does not see that this is precisely what Plato must be reproached with. He does not negate the sensuous, but he asserts that what is thought has being. Thus sensuous being is not expressed in thought, and what is thought too has a being, so that two realms of being exist one beside the other. Here one can see how easily Plato’s pedantry finds a response among common men, and as for Plutarch’s philosophical views, we can class him among the common men. It goes without saying that what in Plato appears original, necessary, at a certain stage of general philosophical development splendid, is in an individual witnessing the departure of the ancient world a shallow reminiscence of the ecstasy of a dead man, a lamp of antediluvian times, the perverseness of an old man who has relapsed into childhood.

There can be no better criticism of Plato than Plutarch’s praise.

“He does not deny the effect produced on us and made perceptible in us, but points out to those who follow him that there are other things more stable and more enduring”

(notions abstracted from sensuous perception and hollow)

“in being because they neither begin nor come to an end nor are subject to any influence

(note mhte — mhte — mhte [neither — nor — nor] 3 negative determinations),

“and teaches by formulating the difference more clearly in words” (correct, the difference is a nominal one),

“to call the one things that are and the other things that come to be.” p. 1116.

“The more recent [philosophers] have also done the like; they refuse to many important realities the name of being — the void, time, place and, generally, the whole class of nameable things, which includes all real ones. For these, they say, though they are not ‘being’, are nevertheless ‘something’; and they continue to make use of them in their lives and their philosophy as permanent and enduring magnitudes.” p. 1116.

Plutarch now addresses Colotes and asks whether they themselves do not distinguish between stable and transient being, etc.

Now Plutarch becomes waggish and says:

“... but Epicurus is wiser than Plato in acknowledging that all alike have being.... He holds that the transient has the same being as the eternal ... and realities that can never divest themselves of their being the same as those whose being lies in the fact that they are acted upon and changed and which never remain the same. Yet if Plato was indeed greatly mistaken in this, he should be called to account for confusion of terms by those who speak better Greek.” p. 1116.

It is amusing to listen to this swaggering respectability which thinks itself clever. He himself, that is, Plutarch, reduces the Platonic differentiation of being to two names, and yet on the other hand

claims that the Epicureans are wrong when they ascribe a stable being to both sides (nevertheless they distinguish quite well the ajqarton [indestructible] and the agennhton [uncreated, having no beginning] from that which exists by composition); does not Plato also do this if the er at d stands stable on the one hand and the genesqai [becoming] on the other?

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## **Marx's Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy**

### **Fourth Notebook**

#### **III. Plutarch. 2. Colotes**

##### **e) Epicurus and Socrates**

[XIX, 2] "For it is one of Epicurus' tenets that none but the sage is unalterably convinced of anything." p. 1117.

An important passage as regards Epicurus' attitude to Scepticism.

[XIX, 5] but the reflection by which we conclude that the senses are not accurate or trustworthy enough does not deny that every single object presents to us a certain appearance, but, though we make use of the perceptions as they appear to us in what we do. it does not allow us to trust them as absolutely and [infallibly] true. [For it is sufficient that they are necessary and that] they are useful, since there is nothing better available." p. 1118.

[XX, 1] "When he [Colotes] ridicules and scores Socrates for seeking to discover what man is and flauntingly (as Colotes puts it) declaring that he did not know it, we can see that Colotes himself had never dealt with the problem." p. 1118.

##### **f) Epicurus and Stilpo**

[XXII, 1-2] "... he [Colotes] says that Stilpo makes life impossible by the assertion that nothing else can be predicated of one thing. For how shall we live if we cannot say that man is good, etc., but only that man is man ... good is good', etc. p. 1119.

While it really must be admitted that Colotes knows how to feel out an opponent's weaknesses, Plutarch lacks philosophical bearings to such an extent that he does not even know what it is an about, especially when the proposition of abstract identity as the death of all life is formulated and censured. He makes the following foolish retort, worthy of the very stupidest village schoolmaster:

[XXII, 3] "What man's life was ever the worse because of it? Who that heard that assertion [i.e., Stilpo's] did not recognise it as coming from a witty mocker or from one who wished to offer it as a dialectical exercise for others? What is bad, Colotes, is not to refuse to call a man good ... but to *refuse* to call *God God* and not to believe in him (and this is what you or your company do), who will not admit that a Zeus exists who presides over generation, or Demeter, the giver of laws, or Poseidon, the begetter. It is this disjoining of one word from another that works harm and fills your lives with contempt of the gods and shamelessness, when you tear away from the gods the

appellations attached to them and also annihilate all sacrifices, mysteries, processions and festivals." p. 1119.

[XXIII, 1] "Stilpo's point, however, is this: if we predicate ... running of a horse, the predicate (he maintains) is not the same as that of which it is predicated, but the concept of what man is is one thing, and that of goodness is another for when asked for a definition we do not give the same for both. 'Therefore they err who predicate one of the other.....

[XXIII, 2] "For if good is the same as man ... how comes it that [we can] also predicate good of food and of medicine ... ?" p. 1120.

A very good and important exposition of Stilpo.

### **g) Epicurus and the Cyrenaics**

[XXIV, 4-5] "For they [the Cyrenaics] say we are affected by sweetness and darkness, each of these influences possessing within itself a specific and unchangeable effect ... whereas the view that honey is sweet ... and night air dark, encounters evidence to the contrary from many witnesses, -animals, things, and men alike; for to some honey is disagreeable, while others feed on [it]. Accordingly opinion continues free from error only as long as it keeps to experience; but when it strays beyond and meddles with judgments and pronouncements about external appearances, it is forever getting embroiled with itself and falling into conflict with others in whom the same things give rise to contrary experiences and dissimilar impressions." p. 1190.

[XXV, 2, 4-5] "For the school that asserts that when a round image impinges on us, or in another case a bent one, the imprint is truly received by the senses, but refuses to allow us to affirm that the tower is round or that the oar is bent, maintains the truth of its impressions as real manifestation, but will not admit that external objects correspond ... for it is the image producing the effect in the eye that is bent.... Thus, since the impression produced on the senses differs from the external object, belief must stick to the impression or be proved if it claims being as well as appearance." p. 1121.

### **h) Epicurus and the Academics (Arcesilaus)**

What Plutarch says on this subject is confined to the -fact that the Academics recognise three movements: fantastikon, ormhnikon and sugkataqetikon [p. 1122], and the error is in the last; so what is perceptible to the senses disappears neither in practice nor in theory, but opinion does.

He tries to prove to the Epicureans that they doubt much of what is evident.

## **IV. Lucretius, On the Nature of Things**

Published by Eichstät, 1801, Vol. 1

It goes without saying that but little use can be made of Lucretius.

### **Book I**

"When human life lay grovelling in all men's sight, crushed to the earth under the dead weight of religion, whose grim features loomed menacingly upon mortals from the four quarters of the sky, a man of Greece was first to raise mortal eyes in defiance, first to stand erect and brave the challenge. Fables of the gods did not crush him, nor the lightning flash and the growling menace of the sky.... Therefore religion in its turn lies crushed beneath his feet, and we by his triumph are lifted level with the skies." ll. 63-80.

"Nothing can ever be created by divine power out of nothing." I. 151.

"... if things were made out of nothing, any species could spring from any source, and nothing would require seed." II. 160 and 161.

"Be not, however, mistrustful of my words, because the primary principles of things are not visible to the eyes." II. 268 and 269.

"Therefore nature works through the agency of invisible bodies." I. 329.

"Neither are things hemmed in by the pressure of solid bodies in a tight mass.

This is because there is void in things." II. 330 and 331.

"*This*" (to wit, the knowledge of the void - KM) "will save you from ever brooding about the universe... For there is a space, untouched and void and vacant. If it did not exist, things could not move at all.... Nothing could proceed, because nothing would give it a starting point by receding.... And if there were no empty space ... things could not possibly have come into existence, hemmed in as they would have been in motionless matter." II. 333-346.

"... mingled with the things is void, from whence things first receive the possibility of movement." II. 383-384.

"All ... nature ... consists of two things, bodies and the void." II. 420 and 421.

Similarly, time by itself does not exist ... no one can sense time by itself apart from the movement of things and restful immobility." II. 460-464

"Neither bodies exist by themselves nor can [events] be said to be by themselves.

"Events cannot be said to be by themselves like matter or in the same sense as the void. Rather, they must be described as accidents of matter, or of the place in which things happen." II. 480-483.

"... we have found that nature is twofold, consisting of two totally different things, matter and space.... Each of these must exist by itself, without admixture of the other. For, where there is empty space ... there matter is not, where matter exists, there cannot be a void. II. 504-510.

"... matter ... everlasting .... " I. 541.

"... there must be an ultimate point in objects... This point is without part and is the smallest thing that can exist. It never has been and never will be able to exist by itself." II. 600-604.

"there are certain bodies ... they do not resemble fire or anything else that can bombard our senses with particles or impinge on our organs of touch." II. 685-690.

"Again, if everything is created from four things and resolved into them, why should we say that these are the elements of things rather than the reverse - that other things are the elements of these?" II. 764-767.

"... then nothing can be created from them [the four elements], neither animate, nor, like a tree, with inanimate body. For each element in a composite assemblage will betray its own nature, air will appear mixed with earth, and fire will remain side by side with moisture. But in fact the elements, in giving birth to things, must contribute a nature that is hidden and viewless, so that nothing may show that conflicts with the thing created and prevents it from being distinctively itself." II. 773-781.

"... they make ... things never cease to interchange, migrating (to be precise, fire rising into the air, hence is born rain, then earth, and from the earth all returns again) from heaven to earth, from earth to the starry firmament. This is something elements ought never to do. For it is essential that something should remain immutable, or everything would be reduced to nothing. For, if ever anything is so transformed that it oversteps its own limits, this means the immediate death of what was before." II. 783-793.

"... because there are in things many elements common to many things commingled in many ways, various things draw their food from various sources." II. 814-816.

"For the same elements compose sky, sea and lands, rivers and sun, crops, trees and animals, but they are moving differently and in different combinations." II. 820-822.

"Add to this that he" (Anaxagoras) "makes the elements too frail.... For which of these things will withstand violent assault, so as to escape extinction... ? Will fire or water or air? Will blood or bones? Nothing, I maintain, will escape, where everything is as perishably as those objects that we see vanishing from before our eyes under stress of some force or other." II. 847-856.

"If flame, smoke and ashes lurk unseen in wood, then wood must consist of unlike matter which rises out of it." II. 872-873.

"Here is left some scanty cover for escaping detection, and Anaxagoras avails himself of it. He asserts that there is in everything a mixture of everything, but all the ingredients escape detection except the one whose particles are most numerous and conspicuous and he nearest the surface. This is far removed from the truth. Otherwise it would naturally happen that corn, when it is crushed by the dire force of the grindstone, would often show some signs of blood.... When sticks are snapped, ashes and smoke ought to be revealed, and tiny hidden fires. But observation plainly shows that none of these things happens. It is clear therefore that one sort of thing is not intermingled with another in this way, but there must be in things a mixture of invisible seeds that are common to many sorts." II. 874-895.

"Now do you see the point of my previous remark, that it makes a great difference in what combinations and positions the same elements occur, and what motions they mutually pass on and take over, so that with a little reshuffling the same ones may produce forests and fires? This is just how the words themselves are formed, by a little reshuffling of the elements, when we pronounce 'forests' and 'fires' as two distinct utterances." II. 906-913.

"... the universe is not bounded in any direction. If it were, it would necessarily have a limit somewhere. But dearly a thing cannot have a limit unless there is something outside to limit it.... Since you must admit that there is nothing outside the universe, it can have no limit, and is accordingly without end or measure." II. 957-963.

"Further, if all the space in the universe were shut in and confined on every side by definite boundaries ... there would be no sky.... As it is, no rest is given to the atoms, because there is no bottom where they can accumulate and take up their abode. Things are happening all the time, through ceaseless motion in every direction; and atoms of matter bouncing up from below are supplied out of the infinite." II. 983-996.

"Nature ... compels body to be bounded by void and void by body. Thus it makes both of them infinite in alternation, or else one of them, if it is not bounded by the other, must extend in a pure state without limit." II. 1008-1012.

"None of these results would be possible if there were not an ample supply of matter to rise up out of infinite space to replace in time all that is lost. just as animals deprived of food waste away through loss of body, so everything must decay as soon as its supply of matter goes astray and is cut off." II. 1034-1040.

As nature in spring lays herself bare and, as though conscious of victory, displays all her charm, whereas in winter she covers up her shame and nakedness with snow and ice, so Lucretius, fresh, keen, poetic master of the world, differs from Plutarch, who covers his paltry ego with the snow and ice of morality. When we see an individual anxiously buttoned-up and clinging into himself, we involuntarily clutch at coat and clasp, make sure that we are still there, as if afraid to lose ourselves. But at the sight of an intrepid acrobat we forget ourselves, feel ourselves raised out of our own skins like universal forces and breathe more fearlessly. Who is it that feels in the more moral and free state of mind -he who has just come out of Plutarch's classroom, reflecting on how unjust it is that the good should lose with life the fruit of their life, or he who sees eternity fulfilled, hears the bold thundering song of Lucretius:

"... high hope of fame has struck my heart with its sharp goad and in so doing has implanted in my breast the sweet love of the Muses. That is the spur that lends my spirit strength to pioneer through pathless tracts of their Pierian realm where no foot has ever trod before. What joy it is to light upon virgin springs and drink their waters. What joy to pluck new flowers and gather for my brow a glorious garland from fields whose blossoms were never yet wreathed by the Muses round any head. This was my reward for teaching on these lofty topics, for struggling to loose men's minds from the tight knots of religion and shedding on dark corners the bright beams of my song that irradiate everything with the sparkle of the Muses." II. 921 ff.

He who would not prefer to build the whole world out of his own resources, to be a creator of the world, rather than to be eternally bothering about himself, has already been anathematised by the spirit, he is under an interdict, but in the opposite sense; he is expelled from the temple and deprived of the eternal enjoyment of the spirit and left to sing lullabies about his own private bliss and to dream about himself at night.

"Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but is virtue itself." [Spinoza, Ethics, Part V, Prop. 42]

We shall also see how infinitely more philosophically Lucretius grasps Epicurus than does Plutarch. The first necessity for philosophical investigation is a bold, free mind.

First we must appreciate the pertinent criticism of earlier natural philosophers from the Epicurean viewpoint. It is all the more worthy of consideration since it brings out in a masterly manner what is specific in the teaching of Epicurus.

We here consider in particular what is taught about Empedocles and Anaxagoras, since the same points are still more valid for the others.

**1.** No *definite* elements can be considered to be the substance, for if everything is included in them and everything arises out of them, what forbids us to assume, on the contrary, that in this alternating process the totality of other things is their principle, since they themselves possess only a determinate, limited mode of existence side by side with the others and are brought forth likewise by the process of these [other] existences? And the other way round (II. 764-768).

**2.** If a number of definite elements are held to be the substance, then they reveal on the one hand their natural one-sidedness by maintaining themselves in conflict with each other, asserting their

determinateness and so dissolving in their opposite; on the other hand they are subject to a natural process, mechanical or other, and reveal their formative ability as one confined to their individuality.

If we concede the Ionian natural philosophers the historical excuse that their fire, water, etc., were not the things perceptible to the senses but something general, then Lucretius as an opponent is completely right in criticising them on these grounds. If obvious elements, obvious to the daylight of the senses, are taken to be the basic substances, then these have as their criterion sensuous perception and the sensuous forms of their existence. If one says that what is in question is a determination of another kind, in which they are the principles of that which exists, then it is a determination which their sensuous individuality conceals; only in internal, therefore external, determination are they principles; that is, they are not principles as given definite elements, precisely not in that which distinguishes each element from the others as fire, water, etc. (II. 773 ff)

**3.** But thirdly the view that definite elements are basic principles is contradicted not only by their limited existence side by side with others, from which they are arbitrarily singled out, and in respect of which, therefore, they differ only according to the determination of number; but being limited far more by the plurality, the infinite number of the others, they seem not only to be determined as to their principle by their mutual relationship in their particularity, which reveals an exclusion just as much as a formative power enclosed in natural limits; but the process itself by which they are supposed to generate the world manifests their finiteness and changeability.

As they are elements enclosed in a particular natural form, their creativity can only be a particular one, that is, their own transformation, which again has the form of particularity, namely, natural particularity; that is, their creativity is the natural-process of their transformation. So these natural philosophers have fire flicker in the air, so rain is produced and falls down, and so the earth is formed. What is shown here is the elements' own changeability and not their constancy, not their substantial being, which they [the natural philosophers] assert as principles; for their creativity is rather the death of their particular existence, and what proceeds out of them comes rather from their non-persistence (II. 783 ff),

The mutual necessity of the elements and natural things for each other's existence signifies only that their conditions are their own powers, outside them as well as inside them.

**4.** Lucretius now comes to the homoeomerias " of Anaxagoras. His objection to them is that

"[he makes] the elements too frail" [II. 847-848],

for since the homoeomerias have the same quality, are the same substance, as that of which they are homoeomerias, we must also attribute to them the same transience as is evident in their concrete manifestations. If wood conceals within itself fire and smoke, that means that it is a mixture *ex alienigeneis* [1. 873]. If every body were made up of all the seeds perceptible to the senses, when it was broken up it would be seen to contain them.

It may seem strange that a philosophy like that of Epicurus, which proceeds from the sphere of the sensuous and, at least in cognition, assesses it as the highest criterion, should posit as principle such an abstraction, such a *caeca potestas* [blind power] as the atom. Concerning this, see lines 773 ff. and 783 ff., where it is seen that the principle must have an independent existence without any particular sensuously perceptible, physical quality. It is substance:

the same elements compose sky, sea and lands, rivers and sun," etc. II. 820 f.

Universality is inherent in it.

An important remark on the relationship of the atom and the void. Lucretius says of this *duplex natura* [dual nature]:

each of these must exist by itself, without admixture of the other." II. 504 ff.

Further, they are mutually exclusive:

"For, where there is empty space ... there matter is not" *loc. cit.*

Each one is itself the principle, so that the principle is neither the atom nor the void, but their basis, that which each of them manifests as an independent nature. This mean is enthroned at the consummation of Epicurean philosophy.

On the void as a principle of motion, see II. 363 ff., notably as an immanent principle, see II. 383 ff., to keueu kai to atomou the objectivised antithesis of thinking and being.

### **Lucretius, on the Nature of Things**

#### **Book II**

"But nothing is sweeter than to stand in a quiet temple stoutly fortified by the teaching of the wise." II. 7 f.

"O joyless hearts of men! O minds without vision! How dark and dangerous the life in which this tiny span is lived away!" II. 14 ff.

"As children in blank darkness tremble and start at everything, so we in broad daylight fear... This dread and darkness of the mind cannot be dispelled by the sunbeams, the shining shafts of day, but only by an understanding of the outward form and inner workings of nature." II. 54 ff.

"Since the atoms are moving freely through the void, they must all be kept in motion either by their own weight or by the impact of another..." II. 82 ff.

"Remember that the universe has nowhere a bottom: there is no place where the atoms could come to rest. It has been variously proved that space is without end or limit and spreads out immeasurably in all directions alike" II. 89 ff.

"... no rest is given to the atoms in their course through the depths of space ... but [they are driven] in an incessant and variable movement", etc. II. 94 ff.

The formation of combinations of atoms, their repulsion and attraction, is a noisy affair. An uproarious contest, a hostile tension, constitutes the workshop and the smithy of the world. The world in the depths of whose heart there is such tumult, is torn within.

Even the sunbeam, falling on shady places, is an image of this eternal war.

"A multitude of tiny particles ... within the light of the beam, as though contending in everlasting conflict, rushing into battle rank upon rank with never a moment's pause in a rapid sequence of unions and disunions. From this you may picture what it is for the atoms to be perpetually tossed about in the inimitable void." II. 115 ff.

One sees how the blind, uncanny power of fate is transposed into the arbitrary will of the person, of the individual, and shatters the forms and substances.

"Besides, there is-a further reason why you should give your mind to these particles that are seen dancing in a sunbeam: their dancing is an actual indication of underlying movements of matter that

are hidden from our sight. There you will see many particles under the impact of invisible blows changing their course and driven back upon their tracks." II. 124 ff.

"First the atoms are set in movement by themselves. Then those small compound bodies that are, as it were, least removed from the impetus of the atoms are set in motion by the impact of their invisible blows and in turn cannon against slightly larger bodies. So the movement mounts up from the atoms and gradually emerges to the level of our senses, so that at last those bodies are in motion that we see in sunbeams, moved by blows that remain invisible." II. 132 ff.

"... when separate atoms are travelling, simple and solid, through empty space, they encounter no obstruction from without and move as single units on the course on which they have embarked. They must certainly have greater speed than anything else and move far faster than the light of the sun" II. 156 ff.

"Even if I knew nothing of the atoms, I would venture to assert on the evidence of the celestial phenomena themselves, supported by many other arguments, that the universe was certainly not created for us by divine power ...". II. 177 ff.

"... no material thing can be uplifted or travel upwards by its own power." II. 177 ff.

The *declinatio atomorum a via recta* is one of the most profound conclusions, and it is based on the very essence of the Epicurean philosophy. Cicero might well laugh at it, he knew as little about philosophy as about the president of the United States of North America.

The straight line, the simple direction, is the negation of immediate being-for-self, of the point; it is the negated point; the straight line is the being-otherwise of the point. The atom, the material point, which excludes from itself the being-otherwise and is absolute immediate being-for-self, excludes therefore the simple direction, the straight line, and swerves away from it. It shows that its nature is not spatiality, but being-for-self. The law which it follows is different from that of spatiality.

The straight line is not only the being-negated of the point, but also its existence. The atom is indifferent -to the breadth of existence, it does not split up into differences which have being, but just as little is it mere being, the immediate, which is, as it were, indifferent to its being, but it exists rather precisely in being different from existence; it encloses itself in itself against that existence; in terms of the sensuous it swerves away from the straight line.

As the atom swerves away from its premise, divests itself of its qualitative nature and therein shows that this divestment, this premiseless, contentless being-enclosed-in-self exists for itself, that thus its proper quality appears, so also the whole of the Epicurean philosophy swerves away from the premises; so pleasure, for example, is the swerving away from pain, consequently from the condition in which the atom appears as differentiated, as existing, burdened with non-being and premises. But the fact that pain exists, etc., that these premises from which it swerves away exist for the individual — this is its finiteness, and therein it is accidental. True, we already find that in themselves these premises exist for the atom, for it would not swerve away from the straight line if the straight line did not exist for it. But this results from the position of the Epicurean philosophy, which seeks the premiseless in the world of the substantial premise, or, to express it in terms of logic, inasmuch as for it [the Epicurean philosophy] the being-for-self is the exclusive, the immediate principle, it has existence directly confronting it, has not logically overcome it.

Determinism is swerved away from by accident, [i.e.] necessity, and arbitrariness raised to the status of law; God swerves away from the world, it does not exist for him, and therein is he God.

It can therefore be said that the *declinatio atomi a recta via* is the law, the pulse, the specific quality of the atom; and this is why the teaching of, Democritus was a quite different philosophy, not the philosophy of the age as the Epicurean philosophy was.

"If it were not for this swerve, everything would fall downwards ... through the abyss of space. No collision would take place and no impact of atom on atom would be created. Thus nature would never have created anything." II. 221 ff.

Inasmuch as the world is created, as the atom refers itself to itself, that is, to another atom, so its [the atom's] motion is not one which presupposes a-being-otherwise, the motion of the straight line, but one which swerves away from the latter, refers itself to itself. In sensuous imagination, the atom can refer itself only to the atom, each of the atoms swerving away from the straight line.

"For this reason also the atoms must swerve a little, but only a very little, so that we will not imagine slantwise movements, which the fact refutes." II. 243 ff.

"Again, if all movement is always interconnected, the new arising from the old in a determinate order-if the atoms never swerve so as to originate some new movement that will snap the bonds of fate, the everlasting sequence of cause and effect-what is the source of the free will possessed by living things throughout the earth? What, I repeat, is the source of that will-power snatched from the fates, whereby we follow the path along which we are severally led by pleasure ... ?" II. 251 ff.

"... on these occasions the will of the individual originates the movements that trickle through his limbs", etc. II. 281 f.

The *declinatio a recta via* is the *arbitrium* [free will], the specific substance, the true quality of the atom.

"So also in the atoms you must recognise the same possibility: besides weight and impact there must be a third cause of movement, the source of this inborn power of ours, since we see that nothing can come out of nothing. For the weight of an atom prevents its movements from being completely determined by the impact of other atoms. But the fact that the mind itself has no internal necessity to determine its every act and compel it to suffer in helpless passivity-this is due to the slight swerve of the atom, not determined by place or time." II. 284 ff.

This *declinatio*, this *clinamen*, [declination, deviation] is neither regions *loci certa nor tempore certo*, [defined by place, determined by time] it is not a sensuous quality, it is the soul of the atom.

In the void the differentiation of weight disappears, that is, it is no external condition of motion, but being-for-self, immanent, absolute movement itself.

"But empty space can offer no resistance to any object in any quarter at any time, so as not to yield free passage as its own nature demands. Therefore, through undisturbed vacuum all bodies must travel at equal speed, although impelled by unequal weight." II. 235 ff.

Lucretius asserts this in contrast to motion restricted through conditions perceptible to the senses:

"The reason why objects falling through water or thin air vary in speed according to their weight is simply that the matter composing water or air cannot obstruct all objects equally, but is forced to give way more speedily to heavier ones." II. 230 ff.

"Do you not see then, that although many men are driven by an external force and often constrained involuntarily to advance or to rush headlong, yet there is within the human breast something that can fight against this force and resist it", etc. II. 277 ff.

See the lines quoted above.

This *potestas*, this *declinare* is the defiance, the headstrongness of the atom, *the quiddam in pectore* [something in the breast] of the atom; it does not characterise its relationship to the world as the relationship of the fragmented and mechanical world to the single individual.

As Zeus grew up to the tumultuous war dances of the Curetes, so here the world takes shape to the ringing war games of the atoms.

Lucretius is the genuine Roman epic poet, for he sings the substance of the Roman spirit; in place of Homer's cheerful, strong, integral characters we have here solid, impenetrable armed heroes possessed of no other qualities, we have the war *omnium contra omnes* [of all against all] the rigid shape of the being-for-self, a nature without god and a god aloof from the world.

We now come to the determination of the more immediate qualities of the atom; we have already clarified its inner, immanent specific quality, which, however, is rather its substance. These determinations are extremely unsatisfactory in Lucretius and on the whole they are among the most arbitrary, and therefore the most difficult parts of the whole Epicurean philosophy.

### 1. The motion of the atoms

"The supply of matter in the universe was never more tightly packed than it is now, or more widely spaced out.... The sum of things cannot be changed by any force." II. 294 f.

"In this connection there is one fact that need occasion no surprise. Although all the atoms are in motion, their totality appears to stand totally motionless.... This is because the atoms all lie far below the range of our senses. Since they are themselves invisible, their movements also must elude observation. Indeed, even visible objects, when set at a distance, often disguise their movements." II. 308 ff.

### 2. Shape

"And now perceive the characteristics of the atoms of all substances, the extent to which they differ in shape and the rich multiplicity of their forms.... When the multitude of them as I have shown, is such that it is without limit or count, it is not to be expected ~ they should all be identical in build and configuration." II. 333 ff.

"There must, therefore, be great differences in the shapes of the atoms to provoke these different sensations." II. 442 f.

"... the number of different forms of atoms is finite. If it were not so, some of the a~ would have to be of infinite magnitude. Within the narrow limits of any single particle, there can be only a limited range of forms. Suppose the atoms consist of three minimum parts, or enlarge them by a few more. When by fitting on parts at top or bottom and transposing left and right you have exhausted every shape that can be given to the whole body by all possible arrangements of the parts, you are obviously left with no means of varying its form further except by adding other parts. Thence it will follow, if you wish to vary its form still further, that the arrangement will demand still other parts in exactly the same way. Variation in shape goes with increase in size. You cannot believe, therefore, that the atoms are distinguished by an infinity of forms; or you will compel some of them to be of enormous magnitude, which I have already proved to be impossible." II. 479 ff.

This *Epicurean dogma* that the *figurarum varietas is not infinita*, [the variety of shapes is not infinite] but that the *corpuscula ejusdem figurae* are *infinita, quorum perpetuo concursu mundus perfectus*

*est resque gignuntur* [Particles with the same shape are infinite out of whose continual collision the world emerged and the bodies arose] is the most important, most immanent consideration of the relationship of the atoms to their qualities, to themselves as principles of a world.

"For whatever might be would always be surpassed by something more excellent." I. 507

"And as all good things might yield to better, so might bad to worse. One thing would always be surpassed by another more offensive..... II. 508 ff.

"Since this is not so, but things are bound by a set limit at either extreme, you must acknowledge a corresponding limit to the different forms of matter." II. 512 ff,

"To the foregoing demonstration I will link on another fact, which will gain credence from this context: the number of atoms of any one form is infinite. Since the varieties of form are limited, the number of uniform atoms must be unlimited. Otherwise the totality of matter would be finite, which I have proved in my verses is not so." II. 522 ff.

The distance, the differentiation of the atoms are finite; were they not assumed to be finite, the atoms in themselves would be mediate, would contain an ideal variety. The infinity of the atoms as repulsion, 'as a negative attitude to themselves, produces an infinity of similars, *quae similes sint, infinitas*, their infinity has nothing to do with their qualitative difference. If one assumed infinite variety in the shapes of the atoms, each atom would contain the other in itself negated, and then there would be atoms which presented the whole infinity of the world, like the monads of Leibniz.

"It is evident, therefore, that there are infinite atoms of every kind to keep up the supply of everything." II. 568 f.

"So the war of the elements that has raged throughout eternity continues on equal terms. Now here, now there, the forces of life are victorious and in turn vanquished. With the voice of mourning mingles the cry that infants raise when their eyes open on the sunlit world. Never has day given place to night nor night to dawn that has not heard, blended with these infant wailings, the lamentation that attends on death and sombre obsequies." II. 547 ff.

"The more qualities and powers a thing possesses, the greater variety it attests in the component atoms and their forms." II. 587 ff.

"For it is essential to the very nature of deity that it should enjoy immortal existence in utter tranquillity, aloof and detached from our affairs. It is free from all pain and peril, strong in its own resources, exempt from any need of us, indifferent to our merits and immune from anger." II. 646 ff.

"... and the atoms do not merge into the light." I. 796.

"Do not imagine that colour is the only quality that is denied to the atoms. They are wholly devoid of warmth and cold and scorching heat; they are barren of sound and starved of savour, and emit no inherent odour from their bodies." II. 842 ff.

"All these must be kept far apart from the atoms, if we wish to provide the universe with imperishable foundations on which it may rest secure; or else you will find everything slipping back into nothing." II. 861 ff.

"It follows that the atoms cannot be afflicted by any pain or experience any pleasure in themselves, since they are not composed of any primal particles, by some reversal of whose movements they might suffer anguish or reap some fruition of vitalising bliss. They cannot therefore be endowed with any power of sensation." II. 967 ff.

"Again, if we are to account for *the power of sensation possessed* by animate creatures in general by attributing sentience to their atoms, what of those atoms that specifically compose the human race?" II. 937 ff.

The answer to this is:

"If they [the principles] are to be likened to entire mortals, they must certainly consist of other elemental particles, and these again of others without end." II. 980 ff.

### [Book III]

"First, I affirm that it [the mind] is of very fine texture and is *composed of* exceptionally minute particles." II. 180 f.

"But what is so mobile must consist of exceptionally minute and spherical atoms ...." II. 187 f.

"The stickier consistency is due to the closer coherence of the component matter, consisting of particles not so smooth or so fine or so round." II. 194 ff. "The greater their weight and roughness, the more firmly they are anchored... II. 202 f.

Negation of cohesion, of specific weight.

"... it may be inferred that mind and spirit are composed of exceptionally diminutive seeds, since their departure is not accompanied by any loss of weight. It must not be supposed that the stuff of mind or spirit is a single element. The body at death is abandoned by a sort of rarefied wind mixed with warmth, while the warmth carries with it also air. Indeed, heat never occurs without an intermixture of air." II. 229 ff.

"The composition of the mind is thus found to be threefold. But all these three components together are not enough to create sentience, since the mind does not admit that any of these can create the sensory motions.... We must accordingly add to these a fourth component, which is quite nameless. Than this there is nothing more mobile or more tenuous-nothing whose component atoms are smaller or smoother." II. 238 ff.

"But usually a stop is put to these movements as near as may be to the surface of the body. Because of this we can retain life." II. 257 f.

"One who no longer is cannot suffer, or differ in any way from one who has never been born, when once this mortal life. has been usurped by death the immortal." II. 880 ff.

*It can be said that in the Epicurean philosophy it is death that is immortal.* The atom, the void, accident, arbitrariness and composition are in themselves death.

"For if it is really a bad thing after death to be mauled and crunched by ravening jaws, I cannot see why it should not be disagreeable to roast in the scorching flames of a funeral pyre, or to lie embalmed in honey, stifled and stiff with cold, on the surface of a chilly slab, or to be squashed under a crushing weight of earth." II. 901 ff.

"Men feel plainly enough within their minds a heavy burden, whose weight depresses them. If only they perceived with equal clearness the causes of this depression, the origin of this lump of evil within their breasts, they would not lead such a life as we now see all too commonly- no one knowing what he really wants and every one for ever trying to get away from where he is, as though mere change of place could throw off the load." II. 1066 ff.

## End of Book Three

Accident is known to be the dominating category with the Epicureans. A necessary consequence of this is that the idea is considered only as a condition; condition is existence accidental in itself. The innermost category of the world, the atom, its connection, etc., is for this reason relegated into the distance and considered as a past condition. We find the same thing with the Pietists and Supernaturalists. The creation of the world, original sin, the redemption, all this and all their godly determinations, such as paradise, etc., are not an eternal, timeless, immanent determination of the idea, but a condition. As Epicurus makes the ideality of his world, the void, into [the condition for] the creation of the world, so also the Supernaturalist gives embodiment to premiselessness, [namely] the idea of the world, in paradise.

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### Marx's Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy

#### Fifth Notebook <sup>[184]</sup>

##### Luc. Annaeus Seneca, Works, Vols. [I-]III, Amsterdam, 1672

Epistle IX, [1,] Vol. II, p. 25. "You desire to know whether Epicurus is right when, in one of his letters, he rebukes those who hold that the wise man is self-sufficient and for that reason does not stand in need of friendships. This is the objection raised by Epicurus against Stilpo and those who believe that the Supreme Good is a dispassionate mind."

"Epicurus himself ... spoke similar language: 'Whoever does not regard what he has as most ample wealth, is unhappy, though he be master of the whole world.'" op. cit., p. 30.

"[...] he (Epicurus) added: 'So greatly blest were Metrodorus and I that it has been no harm to us to be unknown and almost unheard of, in this well-known land of Greece.'" Ep. LXXIX, [15,] p. 317.

"As Epicurus himself says, he will sometimes withdraw from pleasure and even seek pain if either remorse threatens to follow pleasure or a smaller pain is accepted to avoid a larger one." L. Seneca, *On the Leisure of the Wise Man*, p. 582, Vol. I.

"Epicurus also maintains that the wise man, though he is being burned in the bull of Phalaris, will cry out: 'Tis pleasant, and concerns me not at all.' Epicurus will say that it is pleasant to be tortured." Ep. LXVI, [18,] [Vol. 11,] p. 235, also Ep. LXVII, [15,] p. 248.

"We find mentioned in the works of Epicurus two goods, of which his Supreme Good, or blessedness, is composed, namely, a body free from pain and a soul free from disturbance." Ep. LXVI, [45,] p. 241.

"For he [Epicurus] tells us that he had to endure excruciating agony from a diseased bladder and from an ulcerated stomach, -- so acute that it permitted no increase of pain; 'and yet,' he says, 'that day was none the less happy.'" Ep. LXVI, [47,] p. 242.

"I... remember the distinguished words of Epicurus ... 'This little garden ... does not whet your appetite; it quenches it. Nor does it make you more thirsty with every drink; it slakes the thirst by a natural cure, -- a cure that demands no fee. This is the "pleasure" in which I have grown old.' In speaking to you, however, I refer to those desires which refuse alleviation, which must be bribed to

cease. For in regard to the exceptional desires, which may be postponed, which may be chastened and checked, I have this one thought to share with you: a pleasure of that sort is according to our nature, but it is not according to our needs; you owe nothing to it; whatever is expended upon it is a free gift. The belly does not listen to advice; it makes demands, it importunes. And yet it is not a troublesome creditor; you can send it away at small cost, provided only that you give it what you owe, not what you are able to give." Ep. XXI, [9, 10, 11,] pp. 80-81.

"[...] Epicurus, whom you accept as the patron of your indolence, and of whom you think that he teaches softness and idleness and things which lead to pleasure, says: 'Happiness seldom affects the wise man.'" Vol. I, p. 416, *On the Constancy of the Wise Man* [XV 4].

"Epicurus upbraids those who crave, as much as those who shrink from death: 'It is absurd,' he says, 'to run towards death because you are tired of life, when it is your manner of life that has made you run towards death.' And in another passage: 'What is so absurd as to seek death, when it is through fear of death that you have robbed your life of peace?' [To this can be added also] the following: 'Men are so thoughtless, nay, so mad, that some, through fear of death, force themselves to die.'" Ep. XXIV, [22-23,] p. 95.

"I am also of the opinion (and I say this in defiance of my colleagues) that Epicurus' teaching is pure and correct, and on closer consideration even severe: pleasure is confined to a small and insignificant role; and he prescribes for pleasure the law that we prescribe for virtue. He commands it to obey nature, but very little pleasure is sufficient for nature. What is it then? He who describes as pleasure idle leisure and a continual alternation of gluttony and sensuality, seeks a good advocate for a bad cause, and when he, attracted by a misleading name, attains it, he abandons himself to pleasure, yet not to that of which he has heard, but to that which he brought with him." *On the Happy Life*, Vol. I, p. 542.

"[...] *friends* ...the name which our Epicurus bestowed upon them (the *slaves*)." Ep. CVII, [1,] [Vol. II,] p. 526. "[...] Epicurus, Stilpo's critic." p. 30, Ep. IX [20].

"[...] let me tell you that Epicurus says the same thing. ... *that only the wise man knows how to return a favour.*" Ep. LXXXI, [11,] p. 326.

"Epicurus remarks that certain men have worked their way to the truth without anyone's assistance, he, among them, made his own way. And he gives special praise to these, for their impulse has come from within, and they have forged to the front by themselves. Again, he says, there are others who need outside help, who will not proceed unless someone leads the way, but who will follow faithfully. Of these, he says, Metrodorus was one; this type of man is also excellent, but belongs to the second grade." Ep. LII, [3,] [p]p. [176-]177. "You will find still another class of man, -- and a class not to be despised, -- who can be forced and driven into righteousness, who do not need a guide so much as they need someone to encourage and, as it were, to force them along. This is the third class." *ibid.*

"Epicurus, the teacher of pleasure, used to observe stated days on which he satisfied his hunger in niggardly fashion; he wished to see whether he thereby fell short of full and complete happiness, and, if so, by what amount he fell short, and whether this amount was worth purchasing at the price of great effort. At any rate, he makes such a statement in the well-known letter written to Polyaenus in the archonship of Charinus. Indeed, he boasts that he himself lived on less than a penny, but that Metrodorus, whose progress was not yet so great, needed a whole penny. Do you think there can be fulness on such fare? Yes, and there is pleasure also,-- not that shifty and fleeting pleasure which needs a fillip now and then, but a pleasure that is steadfast and sure. For though water, barley-meal, and crusts of barley-bread, are not a cheerful diet, yet it is the highest kind of pleasure to be able to

derive pleasure from this sort of food, and to have reduced one's needs to that modicum which no unfairness of Fortune can snatch away." Ep. XVIII, [9-10,] p[p]. 67[-68].

"[It was to him (Idomeneus)] that Epicurus addressed his well-known saying, urging him to make Pythocles rich, but not rich in the vulgar and equivocal way. 'If you wish,' said he, 'to make Pythocles rich, do not add to his store of money, but subtract from his desires.'" Ep. XXI, [7,] p. 79.

Cf. Stobaeus, Sermon XVII [41-42]. "If you want to make somebody rich, do not give him more money, but free him of some of his desires."

"It is bad to live under necessity, but there is no necessity to live under necessity.' Of course not. On all sides lie many short and simple paths to freedom; and *let us thank God that no man can be kept in life. We may spurn those very necessities*, said [Epicurus]...." Ep. XII, [10-11,] p. 42.

"The fool, with all his other faults, has this also, — *he is always getting ready to live* .... And what is baser than getting ready to live when you are already old? I should not name the author of this motto, except that it is somewhat unknown to fame and is not one of those popular sayings of Epicurus ...." Ep. XIII, [16-17,] p.47.

"He who needs riches least, enjoys riches most,' is a saying of Epicurus." Ep. XIV, [17,] p. 53.

"This is a saying of Epicurus: 'If you live according to nature, you will never be poor; if you live according to opinion, you will never be rich.' Nature's wants are slight; the demands of opinion are boundless." Ep. XVI, [7-8,] p. 60.

"The acquisition of riches has been for many men, not an end, but a change, of troubles." Ep. XVII, [11,] p. 64.

"Here is a draft on Epicurus .... 'Ungoverned anger begets madness.' You cannot help knowing the truth of these words, since you have had not only a slave, but an enemy. But indeed this emotion blazes out against all sons of persons; it springs from love as much as from hate, and shows itself not less in serious matters than in jest and spon. And it makes no difference how important the provocation may be, but into what kind of soul it penetrates. Similarly with fire; it does not matter how great is the flame, but what it falls upon. For solid bodies have repelled the greatest fire; conversely, dry and easily inflammable stuff nourishes the slightest spark into a conflagration." Ep. XVIII, [14-15,] [p]p. [68-]69.

"... of Epicurus. He says: 'You must reflect carefully beforehand with whom you are to eat and drink, rather than what you are to eat and drink. For a dinner of meats without the company of a friend is like the life of a lion or a wolf.'" Ep. XIX, [10,] p. 72.

"No one,' says he (Epicurus), 'leaves this world in a different manner than he was born into it' .... A man has caught the message of wisdom, if he can die as free from care as he was at birth." Ep. XXII, [15, 16,] p. 84.

"I can give you a saying of ... Epicurus: 'It is bothersome always to be beginning life.'" Ep. XXIII, [9,] p. 87.

"When a man has limited his desires within these bounds [i.e., bread and water, which nature demands, cf. Epistle CX, [18,] p. 548], he can challenge the happiness of Jove himself,' as Epicurus says." Ep. XXV, [4,] p. 97.

"Epicurus, who says: 'Reflect which of the two is more convenient, that death should come to us or we go to it.'" Ep. XXVI, [8,] p. 101.

"Wealth is poverty adjusted to the law of nature." Ep. XXVII, [9,] p. 105. "'the knowledge of sin is the beginning of salvation.' This saying of Epicurus seems to me to be an excellent one." Ep. XXVIII, [9,] p. 107.

"Writing to one of the partners of his studies, Epicurus said: 'I write this not for the many, but for you; indeed, each of us is enough of an audience for the other.'" Ep. VII, [11,] p. 21.

"I am still conning Epicurus: 'If you would enjoy real freedom, you must be the slave of Philosophy.' The man who submits and surrenders himself to her is not kept waiting; he is emancipated on the spot. For the very service of Philosophy is freedom." Ep. VIII, [7,] p. 24.

"It was not the class-room of Epicurus, but association with him, that made [them] great men." Ep. VI, [6,] p. 16.

"Hence I hold Epicurus' saying to be most apt: 'That the guilty may haply remain hidden is possible, that he should be sure of remaining hidden is not possible.'" Ep. XCVII, [13,] p. 480.

"I have read the letter of Epicurus addressed to Idomeneus which bears on this matter. The writer asks him to hasten as fast as he can, and beat a retreat before some stronger influence comes between and takes from him the liberty to withdraw. But he also adds that one should attempt nothing except at the time when it can be attempted suitably and seasonably. Then, when the long-sought occasion comes, let him be up and doing. Epicurus forbids us to doze when we are meditating escape and hopes for a safe release from even the hardest trials, provided that we are not in too great a hurry before the time, nor too dilatory when the time arrives." Ep. XXII, [5, 6,] p. 82.

"No reasonable man fears the gods. For it is folly to fear that which is beneficent, and no one loves those whom he fears. In the end, you, Epicurus, disarm God. You have taken from him all weapons, all might, and so that no one should fear him, you have put him out of action. Therefore you have no reason to fear him who is surrounded by a huge and insuperable wall and is separated from the contact and the sight of mortals. He has not the possibility either to give or to harm. In the middle space between this and the other heaven, alone, without any living things, without any humans, without anything, he seeks to escape from the ruins of the worlds which are collapsing above him and around him, not heeding desires and without any concern for us. And yet you wish to appear as if you honour him as a father, with a grateful heart, as it seems to me; or if you do not wish to appear grateful, because you receive no mercy from him, but the atoms and these your particles have formed you accidentally and not according to any plan, why then do you honour him? Because of his majesty, you say, and his unique essence. If I concede you that, apparently you do this not induced by hope of any kind, by reward of any kind. Consequently there is something which is worth striving after for itself, whose worth itself attracts you: that is the moral Good." *On Benefits*, Book IV, Chap. 19, p. 719, Vol. I.

"All these causes could exist,' says Epicurus, and tries several other explanations; and he rebukes those who have asserted that any definite one of these exists, because it is rash to judge apodictically of that which follows only from conjectures. Consequently an earthquake can be caused by water when it has eroded and carried away some parts of the earth, and these have been weakened; that which was borne by the parts when they were undamaged could no longer be held. Pressure of the air can set the earth in motion. For perhaps the air is set in vibration when other air streams in from outside. Perhaps it is shaken and set in motion when a part suddenly gives way. Perhaps it is held up by some part of the earth as by some kind of columns and pillars; if these are damaged and yield, the weight resting on them quakes. Perhaps hot masses of air are transformed into fire and rush down

like lightning, doing great damage to what is in their path. Perhaps some blast of wind sets boggy and stagnant waters in motion and consequently the earth is shaken by an impulse or a vibration of the air, which increases with the motion itself, is carried above from below, however he says that no other cause is of greater importance in the case of an earthquake than motion of the air." *Questions of Nature*, Book VI, Chap. 20, p. 802. Vol. II.

"On this question, two schools above all are in disagreement, that of the Epicureans and that of the Stoics; but each of them points, though in different ways, to retirement. Epicurus says: 'The wise man shows no concern for the state, unless a special situation has arisen.' Zeno says: 'He must have concern for the state unless something hinders him.' The former wants leisure on principle, the latter according to circumstances." *On the Leisure of the Wise Man*, Chap. 30, p. 574, Vol. I.

"The pleasure of Epicurus is not estimated [...] because of how sober and dull it is, but they seize on the mere name, seeking some cover and veil for their lusts. Thus they lose the only good thing which they had in their badness, namely, shame of sinning. For they now praise that over which they blushed formerly, and they glory in vice, and for this reason even young people cannot regain their strength since shameful idleness has been covered with an honourable mantle." p. 541, Chap. 12, [4, 5,] *On the Happy Life*, Vol. I.

"For all these [Plato, Zeno, Epicurus] did not speak of how they themselves lived, but of how one should live." Chap. 18, [1,] p. 550, op. cit.

"Hence God does not dispense mercy, but, untroubled, unconcerned about us, and turned away from the world, he does something else or (and this for Epicurus is the greatest bliss) does nothing, and good deeds affect him no more than acts of injustice." *On Benefits*, Book IV, Chap. 4, [1,] p. 699, Vol. I.

"Here we must bear good testimony to Epicurus, who continually complains that we are ungrateful in respect of the past, that we do not bear in mind the good that we have received and do not include it in enjoyments, as no enjoyment is surer than that which cannot be taken away from us again." *On Benefits*, Book III, Chap. 4 [1,] p. 666, Vol. I].

"We may dispute with Socrates, doubt with Carneades, repose with Epicurus, transcend human nature with the Stoics, defy it with the Cynics; Nature allows us to participate in any age." *On the Shortness of Life*, p. 512, Vol. I.

"In this respect we are in conflict with the self-indulgent and retiring crowd of the Epicureans who philosophise at their banquets and for whom virtue is the handmaid of pleasure. They obey pleasure, they serve it, they see it above themselves." *On Benefits*, Book IV, Chap. 2, p. 697, Vol. I.

"But how can virtue rule pleasure, which it follows, since to follow is proper to him who obeys, and to rule to him who commands?" *On the Happy Life*, Chap. 11, p. 538, Vol. I.

"For you [Epicureans] it is pleasure to abandon the body to idle leisure, to strive after freedom from care like people asleep, to conceal yourselves under a thick veil, to relax the sluggishness of the idle mind with emotional contemplation, which you call repose of the soul, and to strengthen with food and drink in the shade of gardens your bodies weakened by idleness; for us it is pleasure to accomplish good actions, even if they are wearying, provided only that through them the weariness of others is alleviated, or dangerous, provided that through them others are freed from danger, or burdensome for our fortune, provided only the distress and needs of others are attenuated." *On Benefits*, Book IV, Chap. 13, p. 713, Vol. I.

“For those who lack experience and training, there is no limit to the downhill course; such a one falls into the chaos of Epicurus -- empty and boundless.” Ep. LXXII, [9,] p. 274, Vol. II.

“The Epicureans held that philosophy consists of two parts, natural and moral, and they did away with logic. Then, when they were compelled by the facts to distinguish between equivocal ideas and to expose fallacies that lay hidden under the cloak of truth, they themselves also introduced a heading which they called ‘on judgments and rules’, which is another name for logic, but *which they consider an adjunct of natural philosophy.*” Ep. LXXXIX, [11,] p. 397.

“The Epicurean god neither has anything to do himself, nor does he give others anything to do.” *On the Death of the Emperor Claudius*, p. 851, Vol. II.

“Then you say: ‘Is it retirement, Seneca, that you are recommending to me? You will soon be falling back upon the maxims of Epicurus. I do recommend retirement to you, but only that you may use it for greater and more beautiful activities than those which you have resigned.’” Ep. LXVIII, [10,] p. 251.

“I am not so foolish as to go through at this juncture the arguments which Epicurus harps upon, and say that the terrors of the world below are idle, -- that Ixion does not whirl round on his wheel, that Sisyphus does not shoulder his stone uphill, that a man’s entrails cannot be restored and devoured every day; no one is so childish as to fear Cerberus, or the shadows, or the spectral garb of those who are held together by naught but their unfleshed bones. Death either annihilates us or frees us. If we are released, there remains the better part, after the burden has been withdrawn; if we are annihilated, nothing remains: good and bad are alike removed.” Ep. XXIV, [18,] p. 93.

End

#### **Joh. Stobaei Sententiae et Eclogae, etc. Geneva, 1609**

“Thanks be to bountiful nature for having made that which is necessary easy to obtain and that which is difficult to obtain not necessary.

“If you want to make somebody rich, do not give him more money, but free him of some of his desires.

“Temperance is the virtue of the appetitive part of the soul by which, with the help of reason, one represses longings for vulgar pleasure.

“It is the nature of temperance to be able to repress with the help of reason the longing for the vulgar enjoyment of pleasure and to endure and bear natural privations and suffering.” *On Temperance*, Sermon XVII, p. 157.

“We are born once, it is not possible to be born twice, and it is of necessity that life is not longer (*necessarium est aetatem finire*). But you, who have no power over the morrow (*qui ne crastinum diem quidem in tua potestate habes*), are putting off the moment (*tempus differt*). Everybody’s life is wasted through procrastination, and for that reason everyone of us dies without having any leisure.” *On Economy*, Sermon XVI, p. 155.

“I have more than enough bodily pleasure when I have water and bread, and I do not care a straw for costly pleasures, not because of themselves, but because of all the unpleasantness that follows them.

“We feel the need for pleasure when we are sad because we do not have it. But when we do not experience this in our sensations, then we have no need for pleasure. For it is not the natural

pleasure which causes external annoyance, but the striving for empty appearance." *On Temperance*, Sermon XVII [p. 159].

"The laws exist for the wise not so that they shall do no wrong, but so that no wrong shall happen to them." *On the State*, Sermon XLI, p. 270.

"Death is nothing to us. For that which is dissolved is without sensation. And that which is without sensation is nothing to us." *On Death*, Sermon CXVII, p. 600.

"Epicurus of Demos Gargettios proclaimed: 'To him for whom a little is not sufficient, nothing is sufficient.' He said he was prepared to dispute over bliss with anybody if he had only bread and water." *On Temperance*, Sermon XVII, p. 158.

"For this reason Epicurus also believes that those who are ambitious and seek after glory must not practise quietism, but must follow their nature taking part in civic affairs and work for the common weal, for their nature is such that, if they do not attain that for which they strive, they will become restless and embittered through inactivity. And yet he is foolish who enlists in work for the common weal not those who are suitable for it, but those who cannot be inactive; inner tranquillity and inner unrest must not be measured (*securitatem animi anxietatemque metiri*) either by the amount, great or small, of what one has done, but by the good and the bad. For to omit to do good is no less painful and disquieting (*molestum est et turbulentum*) than to do evil." *On Steadfastness*, Sermon XXIX, p. 206.

"When somebody said: 'The wise man will not be affected by love. The evidence for this is ... Epicurus ...', he [Chrysippus] said: 'This I take as a proof. For if ... the unfeeling Epicurus ... was not affected by love (the wise man will certainly not be affected by it)' (*ne sapiens quidem eo capietur*)." [Here and below Marx inserts phrases from a Latin translation of Stobaeus where the Greek text is damaged] *On Sensual Pleasure and Love*, Sermon LXI, p. 393.

"But we will concentrate our attention on the tedious philosophers according to whom pleasure does not conform to nature, but follows that which does conform to nature -- justice, self-control and generosity of mind. Why then does the soul rejoice and find peace (*tranquillatur*) in the smaller goods of the body, as Epicurus says [...?]" *On Intemperance*, Sermon VI, pp. 81, 82.

"Epicurus [assumes] that the gods indeed resemble man, but that one and all they can be perceived only by thought because of the fineness of the nature of their images. He himself however [assumes] four other substances to be indestructible by their nature: the atoms, the void, the infinite, and the *homogeneous particles*; and these are called *homoeomerias* and *elements*." *Physical Selections*, Book 1, p. 5.

"Epicurus [is guided] by necessity, by free decision, by fate. And on the subject of fate they [the Pythagoreans] used to say: 'To be sure there is also a divine part in it, for some men receive from the divinity an inspiration for better or for worse; and in accordance with this some are clearly happy and others unhappy. But it is quite obvious that those who act without previous deliberation and haphazardly are often successful, while others, who deliberate beforehand and consider beforehand how to do something correctly, are not successful. But fate manifests itself in another way, by virtue of which some are talented and purposeful, while others are talentless and, because they have a contrary nature, do harm; the former though hasty in judgment attain every object at which they aim, while the latter do not achieve their object, because their thinking is never purposeful, but confused. This misfortune, however, is innate, and not imposed from outside (*non externam*)." *Physical Selections*, Book I, [p] p. [15-]16.

"[...] Epicurus (calls time) an accident, i.e., a concomitant of movements [...]" I.c., p. 19.

"Epicurus [says] that the fundamental principles of that which is are bodies perceptible through thinking, bodies having no part of void, uncreated, indestructible, which can be neither damaged nor changed. Such a body is called an atom, not because it is the smallest, but because it cannot be divided, can have nothing done to it and has no part of void." *Physical Selections*, Book 1, p. 27.

"Epicurus [says] that the bodies are imperceptible and that the primary ones are simple, and the bodies composed of them have weight; that the atoms move, sometimes falling in a straight line (*rectis lineis*), sometimes swerving from the straight line; and upward movement occurs through collision and repulsion." *Physical Selections*, Book I, p. 33.

"Epicurus ... [says] that coloured bodies have no colour in the dark [...]" *Physical Selections*, Book 1, p. 35.

"[...] Epicurus [says] that the atoms are infinite in number and the void is infinite in extent." *Physical Selections*, Book I, p. 38.

"Epicurus uses alternatively all the names: void, place, space." *Physical Selections*, Book I, p. 39.

Cf. D[iogenes] L[aertius]. "[...] if there did not exist that which we call void and space and intangible nature [...]" p. 32. [Letter] to Herodotus.

"Epicurus [distinguishes] two kinds of motion, that in a straight line and that which swerves away from the straight line." *Physical Selections*, Book I, p. 40.

"Epicurus [says] that the world perishes in many ways, namely, as animal, as plant and in many other ways." *Physical Selections*, Book I, p. 44.

"All others [assumed] that the world is animated and guided by providence; Leucippus, Democritus and Epicurus, on the other hand, make neither of these [assumptions], but say that it arose out of the atoms through nature not endowed with reason." *Physical Selections*, Book I, p. 47.

"Epicurus [says] that the extremity of some worlds is tenuous, that of others is dense, and of these some are mobile, others are immobile." *Physical Selections*, Book I, p. 51.

The following passage from Stobaeus, which does not belong to Epicurus, is perhaps one of the most elevated.

"Is there, Father, anything beautiful besides these? Only God" (by touton choris one should understand schema, chroma, and soma) [shape, colour, and body], "my child, *rather that which is greater is the name of God.*" Stobaeus, *Physical Selections*, Book I, p. 50.

"Metrodorus, the teacher of Epicurus, [says] that ... the causes, however, are the atoms and elements." I.c., p. 52.

"[...] Leucippus, Democritus and Epicurus [say] that an infinite number of worlds [exist] to infinity in every direction; of those who assert an infinite number of worlds Anaximander [says] that they are at equal distance from each other; Epicurus, that the distance between the worlds is unequal." I.c., p. 52.

"Epicurus does not reject any of them" (i.e., the views on the stars), "he adheres to the possible." I.c., p. 54.

“Epicurus says that the sun is a big lump of earth similar to pumice-stone and sponge-like, which has been set on fire through its holes.” I.c., p. 56.

The passage cited above from the Physical Selections, Book 1, p. 5 [see this volume, p. 485] seems, more than the passage quoted by Schaubach, to confirm the view that there are two kinds of atoms. In this passage of the Selections, the omoiotetes [homoeomerias] are adduced as indestructible principles alongside the atoms and the void; they are not eidola [images] but are explained: ai de legontai omoiomeriai chai stoicheia [which are called homoeomerias and elements]. Thus it follows from this passage that the atoms, which underlie appearance, as elements, have no homoeomerias, and possess the qualities of the bodies of which they are the basis. This is in any case false. In the same way Metrodorus adduces as cause ai atomoi chai ta stoicheia [the atoms and the elements] (p. 52).

### **CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, WORKS, COLOGNE, 1688**

“Epicurus also pilfered his leading dogmas from Democritus.” *The Miscellanies*, Book VI, p. 629.

“[...] Homer, while representing the gods as subject to human passions, appears to know the Divine Being, whom Epicurus does not so revere.” *The Miscellanies*, Book V, p. 604.

“Epicurus also says that the removal of pain is pleasure; and says that that is to be preferred, which first attracts from itself to itself, being, that is, wholly in motion Epicurus, indeed, and the Cyrenaics, say that pleasure is the first thing proper to us; for it was for the sake of pleasure, they say, that virtue was introduced, and produced pleasure.” *The Miscellanies*, Book II, p. 415.

“... Epicurus thinks that all joy of the soul arises from previous sensations of the flesh. Metrodorus, in his book, *On the Happiness Which Has Its Source in Ourselves Being Greater Than That Which Arises from Circumstances*, says: What else is the good of the soul but the sound state of the flesh, and the sure hope of its continuance?” *The Miscellanies*, Book II, p. 417.

“Indeed Epicurus says that the man who in his estimation was wise, ‘would not do wrong to anyone for the sake of gain; for he could not persuade himself that he would escape detection.’ So that, if he knew he would not be detected, he would, according to him, do evil.” *The Miscellanies*, Book IV, p. 532.

It does not escape Clement that hope in the future world is also not free from the principle of utility.

“If, too, one shall abstain from doing wrong from hope of the recompense promised by God for righteous deeds, he is not on this supposition spontaneously good (*ne hic quidem sua sponte bonus est*). ... For as fear makes that man just, so reward makes this one; or rather makes him appear to be just.” op. cit.

“Epicurus, too, who very greatly preferred pleasure to truth, supposes faith to be a preconception of the mind (*anticipationem*); and defines preconception as a notion based on something evident, and on the obviously correct image; and asserts that, without preconception, no one can either inquire, or doubt, or judge, or even argue (*arguere*).” *The Miscellanies*, Book II, pp. 365 and 366.

Clement adds:

“If, then, faith is nothing else than a preconception of the mind in regard to what is the subject of discourse”, etc.,

from which one can see what here by *fides intelligi debet*. [must be understood by faith]

“Democritus repudiates marriage and the procreation of children, on account of the many annoyances thence arising, and the abstraction (*abstractio*) from more necessary things. Epicurus agrees, as do all who place good in pleasure, and in the absence of trouble and pain.” *The Miscellanies*, Book II, p. 421.

“[...] but Epicurus, on the other hand (*contra*), supposes that only Greeks can philosophise [...]” *The Miscellanies*, Book I, p. 302.

“Well, then, Epicurus, writing to Menoeceus, says: ‘Let not him who is young delay philosophising’, etc.” *The Miscellanies*, Book IV, p. 501. Cf. Diogenes Laertius, Letter to Menoeceus. [see this volume, pp. 406-07]

“ ... but the Epicureans too say that they have things that may not be uttered (*arcana*), and do not allow all to peruse those writings.” *The Miscellanies*, Book V, p.575.

According to Clement of Alexandria, the apostle Paul had Epicurus in mind when he said:

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, *after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*; branding not all philosophy, but the *Epicurean*, which Paul mentions in the Acts of the Apostles, which *abolishes providence and deifies pleasure*, and whatever other philosophy honours the elements, but places not over them the efficient cause, nor apprehends the Creator.” *The Miscellanies*, Book I, p. 295.

It is good that the philosophers who did not weave fantasies about God are rejected.

This passage is now better understood, and it is known that Paul had all philosophy in mind.

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## **Marx's Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy**

### **[Sixth Notebook]**

#### **[Lucretius On the Nature of Things]**

##### **Book IV**

"... images of things, a sort of outer skin perpetually peeled off the surface of objects and flying about this way and that through the air." II.34 ff.

"Because each particular floating image wears the aspect and form of the object from whose body it has emanated." II.49 f.

"Similarly the films must be able to traverse an incalculable space in an instant of time, and that for two reasons. First, a very slight initial impetus far away to their rear sufficed to launch them and they continue on their course. Secondly, they are thrown off with such a loose-knit texture that they can readily penetrate any object and filter through the interspace of air." II.192 ff.

"... it must be acknowledged that objects emit particles that strike upon the eyes and provoke sight. From certain objects there also flows a perpetual stream, as coolness flows from rivers, heat from the sun, and from the ocean waves a spray that cats away walls round the sea-shore. Sounds of every

sort are surging incessantly through the air. When we walk by the seaside, a salty tang of brine enters our mouth; when we watch a draught of wormwood being mixed in our presence, a bitter effluence touches it. So from every object flows a stream of matter, spreading out in all directions. The stream flows without rest or intermission, since our senses are perpetually alert and everything is always liable to be seen or smelt or to provoke sensation by sound." B.217 ff.

"Again, when some shape or other is handled in the dark, it is recognised as the same shape that in a clear and shining light is plain to see. It follows that touch and sight are provoked by the same stimulus." II.231 ff.

*"This shows that the cause of seeing lies in these films and without these nothing can be seen."* II.238 f.

"That is how we perceive the distance of each object; the more air is driven in front of the film and the longer the draught that brushes through our eyes, the more remote the object is seen to be. Of course this all happens so quickly that we perceive the nature of the object and its stance simultaneously." II.251 ff.

"A similar thing happens when a mirrored image projects itself upon our sight. On its way to us the film shoves and drives before it all the air that intervenes between itself and the eyes, so that we feel all this before perceiving the mirror. When we have perceived the mirror itself, then the film that travels from us to it and is reflected comes back to our eyes, pushing another lot of air in front of it, so that we perceive this before the image, which thus appears to lie at some distance from the mirror." II. 280 ff.

## **Book V**

"The whole substance and structure of the world, upheld through many years, will crash." II. 96 f.

"May reason rather than the event itself convince you that the whole world can collapse with one ear-splitting crack!" II. 109 f.

"For naturally a whole whose members and parts we see to consist of created matter in mortal forms is by the same rule discerned to be likewise created and mortal. So ... it is a fair inference that sky and earth too had their birthday and will have their day of doom." II. 241 ff.

"... you will see ... temples and images of the gods defaced, their destined span not lengthened by any sanctity that avails against the laws of nature." II. 307 ff.

"Again, there can only be three kinds of everlasting objects. The first, owing to the absolute solidity of their substance, can repel blows and let nothing penetrate them so as to unknit their close texture from within. Such are the atoms of matter, whose nature I have already demonstrated. The second kind can last for ever because it is immune from blows. Such is empty space, which remains untouched and not subject to any impact. Last is that which has no available place surrounding it into which its matter can disperse and disintegrate. It is for this reason that the sum total of the universe is everlasting, having no space outside it into which the matter can escape and no matter that can enter and disintegrate it by the force of impact." II. 352 ff.

"It follows that the doorway of death is not barred to sky and sun and earth and the sea's unfathomed floods. It lies tremendously open and confronts them with a yawning chasm." II. 374 ff.

"Already in those early days men had visions when their minds were awake, and more clearly in sleep, of divine figures, dignified in rnen and impressive in stature. To these figures they attributed

sentience, because they were seen to move their limbs and give voice to lordly utterances appropriate to their stately features and stalwart frames. They further credited them with eternal life, because their shape was perpetually renewed and their appearance unchanging and in general because they thought that beings of such strength could not lightly be subdued by any force. They pictured their lot as far superior to that of mortals, because none of them was tormented by the fear of death, and also because in dreams they saw them perform all sorts of miracles without the slightest effort." II. 1168 ff.

## **Book VI**

As the nous of Anaxagoras comes into motion in the Sophists (here the nous becomes *realiter* the not-being of the world) and this immediate daemonic motion as such becomes objective in the daemon of Socrates, so also the practical motion in Socrates becomes a general and ideal one in Plato, and the nous expands itself into a realm of ideas. In Aristotle this process is apprehended again in individuality, but this is now true conceptual individuality.

As in the history of philosophy there are nodal points which raise philosophy in itself to concretion, apprehend abstract principles in a totality, and thus break off the rectilinear process, so also there are moments when philosophy turns its eyes to the external world, and no longer apprehends it, but, as a practical person, weaves, as it were, intrigues with the world, emerges from the transparent kingdom of Amenthes and throws itself on the breast of the worldly Siren. That is the carnival of philosophy, whether it disguises itself as a dog like the Cynic, in priestly vestments like the Alexandrian, or in fragrant spring array like the Epicurean. It is essential that philosophy should then wear character masks. As Deucalion, according to the legend, cast stones behind him in creating human beings, so philosophy casts its regard behind it (the bones of its mother are luminous eyes) when its heart is set on creating a world; but as Prometheus, having stolen fire from heaven, begins to build houses and to settle upon the earth, so philosophy, expanded to be the whole world, turns against the world of appearance. The same now with the philosophy of Hegel.

While philosophy has sealed itself off to form a consummate, total world, the determination of this totality is conditioned by the general development of philosophy, just as that development is the condition of the form in which philosophy turns into a practical relationship towards reality; thus the totality of the world in general is divided within itself, and this division is carried to the extreme, for spiritual existence has been freed, has been enriched to universality, the heart-beat has become in itself the differentiation in the concrete form which is the whole organism. The division of the world is total only when its aspects are totalities. The world confronting a philosophy total in itself is therefore a world torn apart. This philosophy's activity therefore also appears torn apart and contradictory; its objective universality is turned back into the subjective forms of individual consciousness in which it has life. But one must not let oneself be misled by this storm which follows a great philosophy, a world philosophy. Ordinary harps play under any fingers, Aeolian harps only when struck by the storm.

He who does not acknowledge this historical necessity must be consistent and deny that men can live at all after a total philosophy, or he must hold that the dialectic of measure as such is the highest category of the self-knowing spirit and assert, with some of the Hegelians who understand our master wrongly, that mediocrity is the normal manifestation of the absolute spirit; but a mediocrity which passes itself off as the regular manifestation of the Absolute has itself fallen into the measureless, namely, into measureless pretension. Without this necessity it is impossible to grasp how after Aristotle a Zeno, an Epicurus, even a Sextus Empiricus could appear, and how after Hegel attempts, most of them abysmally indigent, could be made by more recent philosophers.

At such times half-hearted minds have opposite views to those of whole-minded generals. They believe that they can compensate losses by cutting the armed forces, by splitting them up, by a peace treaty with the real needs, whereas Themistocles, when Athens was threatened with destruction, tried to persuade the Athenians to abandon the city entirely and found a new Athens at sea, in another element.

Neither must we forget that the time following such catastrophes is an iron time, happy when characterised by titanic struggles, lamentable when it resembles centuries limping in the wake of great periods in art. These centuries set about moulding in wax, plaster and copper what sprang from Carrara marble like Pallas Athena out of the head of Zeus, the father of the gods. But titanic are the times which follow in the wake of a philosophy total in itself and of its subjective developmental forms, for gigantic is the discord that forms their unity. Thus Rome followed the Stoic, Sceptic and Epicurean philosophy. They are unhappy and iron epochs, for their gods have died and the new goddess still reveals the dark aspect of fate, of pure light or of pure darkness. She still lacks the colours of day.

The kernel of the misfortune, however, is that the spirit of the time, the spiritual monad, sated in itself, ideally formed in all aspects in itself, is not allowed to recognise any reality which has come to being without it. The fortunate thing in such misfortune is therefore the subjective form, the modality of the relation of philosophy, as subjective consciousness, towards reality.

Thus, for example, the Epicurean, [and the] Stoic philosophy was the boon of its time; thus, when the universal sun has gone down, the moth seeks the lamplight of the private individual.

The other aspect, which is the more important for the historian of philosophy, is that this turn-about of philosophy, its transubstantiation into flesh and blood, varies according to the determination which a philosophy total and concrete in itself bears as its birthmark. At the same time it is an objection to those who now conclude in their abstract one-sidedness that, because Hegel considered Socrates' condemnation just, i.e., necessary, because Giordano Bruno had to atone for his fiery spirit in the smoky flame at the stake, therefore the philosophy of Hegel, for example, has pronounced sentence upon itself. But from the philosophical point of view it is important to bring out this aspect, because, reasoning back from the determinate character of this turnabout, we can form a conclusion concerning the immanent determination and the world-historical character of the process of development of a philosophy. What formerly appeared as growth is now determination, what was negativity existing in itself has now become negation. Here we see, as it were, the curriculum vitae of a philosophy in its most concentrated expression, epitomised in its subjective point, just as from the death of a hero one can infer his life's history.

Since I hold that the attitude of the Epicurean philosophy is such a form of Greek philosophy, may this also be my justification if, instead of presenting moments out of the preceding Greek philosophies as conditions of the life of the Epicurean philosophy, I reason back from the latter to draw conclusions about the former and thus let it itself formulate its own particular position.

To define the subjective form of Platonic philosophy still further in a few features, I shall examine more closely some views set forth by Professor Baur in his work *Das Christliche im Platonismus*. Thus we shall arrive at a result by simultaneously clarifying opposing views more precisely.

*Das Christliche des Platonismus oder Sokrates und Christus*, by D. F. C. Baur, Tübingen, 1837.

Baur says on page 24:

"According to this, Socratic philosophy and Christianity, considered at their starting point, are related to each other as consciousness of self and consciousness of sin."

It seems to us that the comparison between Socrates and Christ, presented in this way, proves precisely the opposite of what is to be proved, namely, the opposite of an analogy between Socrates and Christ. Consciousness of self and consciousness of sin are, of course, related to each other as the general and the particular, that is to say, as philosophy and religion. This position is adopted by every philosopher, whether ancient or modern. This would be the eternal separation of the two fields rather than their unity, admittedly also a relationship, for every separation is separation of a unity. This means nothing more than that the philosopher Socrates is related to Christ as a philosopher to a teacher of religion. If now a similarity, an analogy is established between grace and Socrates' midwifery, irony, this means carrying only the contradiction, not the analogy, to the extreme. Socratic irony, as understood by Baur and as it must be understood with Hegel, namely as the dialectic trap through which human common sense is precipitated out of its motley ossification, not into self-complacent knowing-better, but into the truth immanent in human common sense itself, this irony is nothing but the form of philosophy in its subjective attitude to common consciousness. The fact that in Socrates it has the form of an ironical, wise man follows from the basic character of Greek philosophy and its attitude to reality. With us irony as a general immanent form, so to speak, as philosophy was taught by Fr. v. Schlegel. But objectively, so far as content is concerned, Heraclitus, who also not only despised, but hated human common sense, is just as much an ironist, so is even Thales, who taught that everything is water, though every Greek knew that no one could live on water, so is Fichte with his world-creating ego, despite which even Nicolai realised that he could not create any world, and so is any philosopher who asserts immanence in opposition to the empirical person.

In grace, on the other hand, in consciousness of sin, not only the subject which receives grace, which is brought to consciousness of sin, but even that which bestows grace and that which arises out of the consciousness of sin are empirical persons.

If therefore there is any analogy here between Socrates and Christ, it must consist in the fact that Socrates is philosophy personified and Christ is religion personified. But here it is not a question of a general relation between philosophy and religion; the question is rather in what relation personified philosophy stands to personified religion. That they have some relation to each other is a very vague truth or rather the general condition of the question, not the particular basis of the answer. In this striving to prove the existence of a Christian element in Socrates, the relation between the two persons, namely Christ and Socrates, is defined no further than as the relation in general of a philosopher to a teacher of religion; the same vacuity is revealed when the general moral division of Socrates' Idea, Plato's Republic, is placed in relationship to the general division of the Idea, and Christ as a historical personality in relationship mainly to the church.

If Hegel's pronouncement, which Baur accepts, is correct, [§552 *Philosophy of Mind*] that in his Republic Plato asserted Greek substantiality against the irrupting principle of subjectivity, then Plato is diametrically opposed to Christ, since Christ asserted this element of subjectivity against the existing state, which he characterised as only worldly, and therefore unholy. The fact that Plato's Republic remained an ideal, whereas the Christian church achieved reality, was not the real difference but was expressed reversed in Plato's Idea following reality, whereas that of Christ preceded it.

In general it is far more correct to say that there are Platonic elements in Christianity rather than Christian elements in Plato, particularly as the earliest Fathers of the Church proceeded historically in

part from Platonic philosophy, e.g., Origen, Irenaeus. From the philosophical point of view it is important that in Plato's Republic the first estate is that of the learned or the wise. It is the same with the relationship of Platonic ideas to the Christian logos (p. 38), the relationship of the Platonic recollection to the Christian restoration of man to his original image (p. 40), and with Plato's fall of souls and the Christian falling into sin (p. 43), myth of the pre-existence of the soul.

Relation of the myth to Platonic consciousness.

Platonic transmigration of souls. Connection with the constellations.

Baur says on page 83:

"There is no other philosophy of antiquity in which philosophy bears so much of a religious character as in Platonism."

This must also follow from the fact that Plato defines the "task of philosophy" (p. 86) as a *luisis, apallagh, cwrimos* [saving, freeing, separation] of the soul from the body, as a dying and a *meletan apoqnhaskein*.

"That this saving force in the final resort is ascribed to philosophy is, to be sure, the one-sidedness of Platonism p. 89.

On the one hand, one could accept Baur's pronouncement that no philosophy of antiquity bears so much the character of religion as the Platonic. But it would only mean that no philosopher had taught philosophy with more religious inspiration, that to no one philosophy had to a greater extent the determination and the form, as it were, of a religious cult. With the more intensive philosophers, such as Aristotle, Spinoza, Hegel, their attitude itself had a more general form, less steeped in empirical feeling; but for that reason Aristotle's inspiration, when he extols *qewria* [theory] as the best thing, to *hdiston kai ariston* [the most pleasant and best], or when he admires the rationality of nature in his treatise *peri ths fusews xwikhhs* [On the nature of animals], and Spinoza's inspiration when he speaks of contemplation *sub specie aeternitatis*, [from the point of view of eternity] of the love of God or of the *libertas mentis humanae*, [freedom of the human mind] and Hegel's inspiration when he expounds the eternal realisation of the Idea, the magnificent organism of the universe of spirits, is more genuine, warmer, more beneficial to a mind with a more general education, for that reason the inspiration of Plato culminates in ecstasy while that of the others bums on as the pure ideal flame of science; that is why the former was only a hot-water bottle for individual minds, while the latter is the animating spirit of world-historical developments.

Hence even if it may be admitted, on the one hand, that in the Christian religion, as the peak of religious development, there must be more points of contact with the subjective form of Platonic philosophy than with that of other early philosophies, it must equally be asserted on the same grounds that in no philosophy the opposition between the religious and the philosophical could be expressed more clearly, for here philosophy appears in the character of religion, while there religion appears in the character of philosophy.

Further, Plato's pronouncements on the salvation of the soul, etc., prove nothing at all, for every philosopher desires to free the soul from its empirical limitation; to draw an analogy with religion only shows a lack of philosophy, namely, to consider this as the task of philosophy, whereas it is only the condition for fulfilling that task, only the beginning of the beginning.

Finally, it is no defect of Plato, no one-sidedness, that he ascribes this saving force in the last resort to philosophy; it is the one-sidedness which makes of him a philosopher and not the teacher of a faith.

It is not the one-sidedness of Plato's philosophy, but that by which alone it is philosophy. It is that by which he negates again the formula-which has just been denounced-[namely, the formula] of a task of philosophy which would not be philosophy itself.

"In this, therefore, in the striving to provide what has been cognised through philosophy with a basis independent of the subjectivity of the individual [i.e., an objective basis], lies the reason why Plato, precisely when he expounds truths which are of the greatest moral and religious interest, at the same time presents them in a mythical form." p. 94.

Is anything at all explained in this way? Does not this answer include as its kernel the question of the reason for this reason? The question that arises is: why is it that Plato felt the desire to provide a positive, above all mythical, basis for what is cognised by philosophy? Such a desire is the most astonishing thing that can be attributed to a philosopher, for it means that he does not find the objective force in his system itself, in the eternal power of the Idea. That is why Aristotle calls mythologising kenologising.

On the surface of it, the answer to this can be found in the subjective, namely dialogic, form of the Platonic system and in irony. What is the pronouncement of an individual and is asserted as such in opposition to opinions or individuals, needs some support through which the subjective certainty becomes objective truth.

But then a further question arises: why is this mythologising to be found in those dialogues which mainly expound moral and religious truths, whereas the purely metaphysical Parmenides is free from it? The question is: why is the positive basis a mythical one and a reliance on myths?

And here we have the answer to this riddle. In expounding definite questions of morality, religion, or even natural philosophy, as in *Timaeus*, Plato sees that his negative interpretation of the Absolute is not sufficient; here it is not enough to sink everything in the one dark night in which, according to Hegel, all cows are black; at this point Plato has recourse to the positive interpretation of the Absolute, and its essential form, which has its basis in itself, is myth and allegory. Where the Absolute stands on one side, and limited positive reality on the other, and the positive must all the same be preserved, there this positive becomes the medium through which absolute light shines, the absolute light breaks up into a fabulous play of colours, and the finite, the positive, points to something other than itself, has in it a soul, to which this husk is an object of wonder; the whole world has become a world of myths. Every shape is a riddle. This has recurred in recent times, due to the operation of a similar law.

This positive interpretation of the Absolute and its mythical-allegorical attire is the fountain-head, the heartbeat of the philosophy of transcendence, a transcendence which at the same time has an essential relation to immanence, just as it essentially breaks through the latter. Here we have, of course, a kinship of Platonic philosophy with every positive religion, and primarily with the Christian religion, which is the consummate philosophy of transcendence. Here we have therefore also one of the viewpoints from which a more profound relationship can be established between historical Christianity and the history of ardent philosophy. It is in connection with this positive interpretation of the Absolute that Plato saw in an individual as such, Socrates, the mirror, so to speak, the mythical expression of wisdom, and called him the philosopher of death and of love. That does not mean that Plato negated the historical Socrates; the positive interpretation of the Absolute is connected with the subjective character of Greek philosophy, with the definition of the wise man.

Death and love are the myth of negative dialectic, for dialectic is the inner, simple light, the piercing eye of love, the inner soul which is not crushed by the body of material division, the inner abode of

the spirit. Thus the myth of it is love, but dialectic is also the torrent which smashes the many and their bounds, which tears down the independent forms, sinking everything in the one sea of eternity. The myth of it is therefore death.

Thus dialectic is death, but at the same time the vehicle of vitality, the efflorescence in the gardens of the spirit, the foaming in the bubbling goblet of the tiny seeds out of which the flower of the single flame of the spirit bursts forth. Plotinus therefore calls it the means of the soul's *aplwsis*. [simplification] of its direct union with God, an expression in which death and love and at the same time Aristotle's *qewria*, [theory] are united with Plato's dialectic. But as these determinations in Plato and Aristotle are, as it were, presupposed, not developed out of immanent necessity, their submergence in the empirical individual consciousness in Plotinus appears as a condition, the condition of *ecstasy*.

Ritter (in his *Geschichte der Philosophie alter Zeit*, Part 1, Hamburg, 1829) speaks with a certain repulsive moralising superiority about Democritus and Leucippus, in general about the atomistic doctrine (later also about Protagoras, Gorgias, etc.). There is nothing easier than to rejoice in one's own moral perfection on every occasion, easiest of all when dealing with the dead. Even Democritus' learning is made a subject of reproach (p. 563); mention is made of

"how sharply the higher flight of speech, simulating inspiration, must have contrasted with the base attitude which underlies his outlook on life and the world." p. 564.

Surely that is not supposed to be a historical remark! Why must precisely the attitude underlie the outlook and not rather the other way round, the definite outlook and discernment underlie his attitude? The latter principle is not only more historical, it is also the only one according to which a philosopher's attitude may be considered in the history of philosophy. We see in the shape of the spiritual personality what is expounded to us as a system, we see, as it were, the demiurge standing alive at the centre of his world.

"Of the same content is also the proposition of Democritus that something primary, which did not come into existence, must be assumed, for time and infinity did not come into existence, so that to inquire after their origin would mean to seek the beginning of the infinite. One can see in this only a sophisticated denial of the question of the origin of all phenomena." p. 567.

I can see in that assertion of Ritter's only a moral denial of the question concerning the basis of this Democritean determination; the infinite is posited in the atom as a principle, it is contained in the definition of the atom. To inquire after the basis of the definition would, of course, be to negate his definition of the concept.

"Democritus ascribes to the atom only one physical property, weight... One can again recognise here the mathematical interest which seeks to save the applicability of mathematics to the calculation of weight." p. 568.

"Hence the atomists deduced motion also from necessity, conceiving the latter as the causelessness of motion receding into the indeterminate." p. 570.

[IX, 19] "Democritus, however, holds that certain images approach (meet) men; some of these have a beneficial effect, others a harmful one; for this reason also he prays that only images endowed with reason should meet him. But these are big and gigantic and indeed very hard *to destroy*, but not indestructible; he says they foretell men the future, are visible and emit sound. Proceeding from the notion of these images, the ancients conjectured that there is a god Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors*, p. 311.

[20-21] "Now Aristotle said that the notion of god arose in men from two factors, from the processes in the soul and from the heavenly phenomena. From the processes in the soul because of the divine inspiration of the soul in sleep and because of the prophecies. For, he says, when the soul in sleep becomes independent, it discards its own nature, has premonitions and foretells the future.... For this reason, he says, men have surmised that god is something which in itself resembles the soul and the most intelligent of all. But also from the heavenly phenomena." op. cit., pp. 311 f.

[25] "Epicurus believes that men derived the notion of god from the visions of fantasy which appear during sleep. For, he says, since in sleep big images resembling human beings appear, they assume that in reality also there are some such gods resembling human beings." op. cit., p. 312.

[58] "[... ] Epicurus, some say, admits the existence of God as far as the multitude is concerned, but not as far as the nature of things goes." op. cit., p. 319.

a) Soul p. 321. *Against the Professors* [Book IX].

[218] "[... ] Aristotle asserted that God is incorporeal and the limit of heaven, the Stoics that he is a breath which permeates even through things foul, Epicurus that he is anthropomorphic, Xenophanes that he is an impassive sphere.... [219] Epicurus declares that 'what is blessed and incorruptible neither feels trouble itself nor causes it to others.'" *Outlines of Pyhonism*, Book III, p. 155.

[219-221] "But to Epicurus, who wishes to define time as the accidental of accidentals (sumppwma snmpwatwn), can be objected, besides many other things, that everything which behaves as substance belongs to the substrates, to the underlying subjects; but what is called accidental possesses no consistency, since it is not separate from the substances. For there is no resistance (antitnpia) except the bodies which resist, no making way (eixis) (yielding) except that which yields and the void, etc." [*Against the Professors*, Book IX, p. 417.]

[240-241] "Hence Epicurus, who says that a body must be thought of as a composition of size, and *shape*, resistance and weight, forces us to think of an existing body as consisting of non-existing bodies.... Hence, in order that there may be time, there must be accidentals; but in order that there may be accidentals, there must be an underlying condition; and if there is no underlying condition, neither can there be time."

[244] "So if this is time,-and Epicurus says its accidentals are time"

(by this abantwn one must understand hmera, nux, wra, kinhsis, mouh, paqos, apaqeia, etc.),

" - then according to Epicurus, time will be its own accidental." *Against the Professors* [Book IX], pp. 420 and 421.

If, according to Hegel, the Epicurean philosophy of nature deserves no great praise when judged by the criterion of objective gain, from the other point of view, according to which historical phenomena do not stand in need of such praise, the frank, truly philosophical consistency with which the whole range of the inconsistencies of his principle in itself is expounded, is admirable. The Greeks will for ever remain our teachers by virtue of this magnificent objective naïveté, which makes everything shine, as it were, naked, in the pure light of its nature, however dim that light may be.

Our time in particular has given rise even in philosophy to evil phenomena, guilty of the greatest sin, the sin against the spirit and against truth, inasmuch as a hidden intention lurks behind the judgement and a hidden judgment behind the intention.

## Marx's Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy

### Seventh Notebook

#### I. Cicero, On the Nature of the Gods

##### Book I

*Chap. VIII* "Hereupon, Velleius began, in the confident manner that is customary with them [the Epicureans], afraid of nothing so much as lest he should appear to have doubts about anything. One would have supposed he had just come down from the assembly of the gods and from the intermundane spaces of Epicurus", etc., etc.

*Chap. XIII* Fine is the passage from Antisthenes:

"... in his book entitled *The Natural Philosopher*, he says that while there are many *gods of popular belief*, there is *one god in nature* [... ]".

*Chap. XIV*. Of Zeno the Stoic it is said:

"... in his interpretation of Hesiod's *Theogony* he does away with the customary and received ideas of the gods altogether, for he does not reckon either Jupiter, Juno or Vesta as gods, or any being that is so called, but teaches that these names have been assigned with a certain meaning to dumb and lifeless things".

*Chap. XV*. Of Chrysippus the Stoic it is said:

"In Book II [of his *Nature of the Gods*] he aims at reconciling the myths of Orpheus, Musa, Hesiod and Homer with what he himself said in Book 1 of the immortal gods, and so makes out that even the earliest poets of antiquity, who had no notion of these doctrines, were really Stoics".

"In this he is followed by Diogenes of Babylon, who in his book entitled *Minerva* transfers the birth of the virgin goddess from Jove to physiology and dissociates it from myth".

*Chap. XVI*. "For he [Epicurus] alone perceived that, first there must be gods, because nature herself has imprinted a conception of them on the minds of all mankind. For what nation or what tribe of men is there but possesses untaught some preconception of the gods? Such notions Epicurus designates by the word *prolēpsis*, [prolepsis] that is, a sort of preconceived mental picture of a thing without which nothing can be understood or investigated or discussed. The significance and usefulness of this argument we learn in that work of genius, *Epicurus' Rule or Standard of Judgment*".

*Chap. XVII*. .... it must be understood that the gods exist, since we possess an instinctive, or rather innate, concept of them; but a belief which all men by nature share must necessarily be true.... If this is so, the famous maxim of Epicurus truthfully enunciates that 'that which is eternal and blessed can neither know trouble itself nor cause trouble to another, and accordingly cannot feel either anger or favour, since all such things belong only to the weak'. [...] whatever is outstanding commands the reverence that is its due [... ]".

*Chap. XVIII*. "From nature all men of all races derive the notion of gods as having human shape and none other... But not to make primary concepts the sole test of all things, reason itself delivers the same pronouncement [...] what shape [...] can be more beautiful than the human form? [...] it

follows that the gods possess the form of man. However, that form is not a body, but only a semblance of a body, it has no blood, but only the semblance of blood”.

*Chap. XVIII-XIX.* “Epicurus ... teaches that the force and nature of the gods is such that, in the first place, it is perceived not by the senses but by the mind, not as solid things, or according to number, like that which Epicurus in virtue of their substantiality calls *sterimnia*, [solid objects] but as images, which are perceived by similitude and succession”.

*Chap. XIX.* “Because an endless train of precisely similar images arises from the innumerable atoms and streams towards the gods, our mind with the keenest feelings of pleasure fixes its gaze on these images and so attains an understanding of the nature of a being both blessed and eternal. Moreover there is the supremely potent principle of infinity, which claims the closest and most careful study; and we must understand that this nature is such that like always corresponds to like. This is termed by Epicurus *isonomia*, or the principle of uniform distribution. From this principle it follows that if the whole number of mortals be so many, there must exist no less a number of immortals, and if the forces of destruction are beyond count, the forces of conservation must also be infinite. You Stoics are fond of asking us, Balbus, what is the mode of life of the gods and how they pass their days. It is obvious that nothing happier is conceivable, nothing more abounding in all good things. For God does nothing, he is free from all ties of occupations, he toils not, neither does he labour, but he takes delight in his wisdom and virtue and he knows with absolute certainty that he will always enjoy the greatest and eternal pleasures”.

*Chap. XX.* “This god we can rightly call happy, yours indeed most toilsome. For if the world itself is God, what can be less restful than to revolve at incredible speed round the axis of the heavens without a single moment of respite? But without rest there is no bliss. But if there is in the world some god who rules and governs it, maintaining the courses of the stars, the changes of the seasons and all the ordered process of things, and, watching over the land and the seas, guards the interests and the lives of men, is he not involved in irksome and laborious business! [531 We for our part deem happiness to consist in tranquillity of mind and entire exemption from all duties. For he who taught us all the rest has also taught us that the world was made by nature, without needing an artificer to construct it, and that which you say cannot be produced without divine skill is so easy that nature will produce, is producing and has produced worlds without number. Because you cannot see how nature can do all this without any intellect, you, like tragic poets, cannot biting your arguments to a denouement and have recourse to a god. His work you would certainly not require if you would but contemplate the immense and boundless extent of space that stretches out in every direction into which the mind projects itself and journeys onward far and wide without ever seeing any ultimate limit where it could stop. In this immense length and breadth and height there *flits an infinite quantity of atoms innumerable, which though separated by void yet cohere together and taking hold of each other form an unbroken series* out of which are created those shapes and forms of things which you think cannot be created without bellows and anvil and *so have saddled us with an eternal master whom we must fear day and night; for who would not fear a prying busybody of a god who foresees and thinks of and notices all things and deems that everything is his concern. An outcome of this was first of all that fatal necessity which you call *eimarmenh* [fate] according to which whatever happens is the result of an eternal truth and an unbroken chain of causes. But what value can be assigned to a philosophy which holds Eke old women, and ignorant old women at that, that everything happens by fate? And next follows your *mantikh* [divination] in Latin *divinatio*, by which, if we listened to you, we should be so filled with superstition that we should be the devotees of soothsayers, augurs, oracle-mongers, seers and interpreters of dreams. But Epicurus has set us free from these terrors and delivered us out of*

captivity, so that we have no fear of beings who, we know, create no trouble for themselves and seek to cause none to others, while we worship with pious reverence the transcendent majesty of nature”.

*Chap. XXL.* Then follows Cotta’s objection.

“I ... pronounce that your exposition has been most illuminating, and not only rich in thought, but also *more graced with a charm of style than is customary in your school*”.

*Chap. XXIII.* “You said that a sufficient reason for our admitting that the gods exist was the fact that all the nations and races of mankind believe it. But that is at the same time a weak argument and a false one. ...”.

(After relating that the books of Protagoras, in which he denied the existence of the gods, had been burnt in the assembly of the people and he himself driven out of the country, Cotta continued:)

“From this I can well suppose that many people were caused to be more reserved in professing that opinion, since not even doubt could escape punishment”.

*Chap. XXIV.* “... for the outrageous doctrines of Democritus, or of Leucippus before him, that there are certain minute particles, some smooth, others rough, some round, some angular, some curved or hook-shaped, and that heaven and earth were created from these, *not compelled by nature*, but by *some kind of accidental collision*.... Then is this the truth? For as to happiness I do not deny anything, of which you say that not even the divinity has it without being relaxed in idleness.... I will grant you therefore that everything is made out of indivisible bodies; but this takes us no further for we are trying to discover the nature of the gods. Suppose we allow that they are made of atoms, then they are not eternal. For what is made of atoms came into existence at some time; but if they came into existence, before they came into existence there were no gods. And if the gods had a beginning, they must also perish, as you were arguing a little while ago about the world conceived by Plato. Where then do we find your blessed and eternal, by which two words you mean God? When you wish to make this out, you take cover in a thicket of jargon. For you said just now that God has no body, but a semblance of a body, no blood, but a semblance of blood”.

*Chap. XXV.* “This is a very common practice with your school. You advance a paradox, and then, when you want to escape censure, you adduce something which is absolutely impossible, so that it would have been better to abandon the point in dispute rather than to insist on it so shamelessly. For instance, Epicurus saw that if the atoms travelled downwards by their own- outright, we should have no power to do anything, since the motion of the atoms would be determined by necessity. He therefore invented a device by which to avoid necessity [a point which had apparently escaped the notice of Democritus]: he said that the atom, while travelling vertically downward by weight and gravity, makes a very slight swerve. To assert that is more shameful than not to be able to defend what he wants to defend”.

It is of substantial significance that the cycle of the three Greek philosophical systems, which complete pure Greek philosophy, the Epicurean, the Stoic and the Sceptic, take over their main elements from the past as they were already there. Thus, the Stoic philosophy of nature is largely Heraclitean, its logic is similar to that of Aristotle, so that Cicero already noted:

“... the Stoics, while they seem to agree with the Peripatetics as to substance, disagree in words”. *On the Nature of the Gods*, Book 1, Chap. vii.

Epicurus’ philosophy of nature is basically Democritean, his ethics similar to that of the Cyrenaics. Finally, the Sceptics are the scientists among the philosophers, their work is to compare, and

consequently to assemble together the various assertions already available. They cast an equalising, levelling learned glance back on the systems and thereby brought out the contradictions and oppositions. Their method also has its general prototype in the Eleatic, Sophistic, and pre-Academic dialectics. And yet these systems are original and form a whole.

But they not only found ready-made building elements for their science; the living spirits of their spiritual realms themselves preceded the latter, so to speak, as prophets. The personalities associated with their system were historical persons, system was, so to speak, incorporated in system. This was the case with Aristippus, Antisthenes, the Sophists and others.

How is this to be understood?

Aristotle's remark about the "nutritive soul":

"It is possible for this ... to exist apart from the others; but for the others to exist apart from it is impossible, at least in mortal beings" (Aristotle, *On the Soul*, Book I, chap. ii),

must be borne in mind also in regard to Epicurean philosophy in order to understand it itself on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to understand Epicurus' own apparent absurdities as well as the ineptitude of his later critics.

With him the most general form of the concept is the *atom*; for this is its most general form of being, which, however, is in itself concrete and a genus, itself a species as against higher particularisations and concretisations of the concept of his philosophy.

The atom, therefore, remains the abstract being-in-itself, for example, of the person, of the wise man, of God. These are higher qualitative additional determinations of the same concept. Therefore, in the genetic exposition of this philosophy one must not raise the inept question raised by Bayle and Plutarch, among others, as to how can a person, a wise man, a god, arise from and be composed of atoms. On the other hand, this question seems to be justified by Epicurus himself, for of the higher forms of development, e.g., God, he says that the latter consists of finer and more subtle atoms. In this connection it must be noted that Epicurus' own consciousness is related to its further developments, to the further determinations of its principle imposed on him as the scientific consciousness of later people regarding his system.

If, for example, in respect of God, etc., abstraction being made of the further determinations of form which he introduces as a necessary link in the system, the question is raised of his existence, his being-in-itself, then the general form of existence is the atom and the plurality of atoms; but precisely in the concept of God, of the wise man, this existence has been submerged in a higher form. His specific being-in-itself is precisely the further determination of his concept and his necessity in the totality of the system. If the question is raised of any other form of being outside this, that is a relapse into the lower stage and form of the principle.

But Epicurus is bound to fall back constantly in this way, for his consciousness is atomistic like his principle. The essence of his nature is also the essence of his actual self-consciousness. The instinct which drives him, and the further determinations of this instinct-driven essence, are similarly again to him one phenomenon among others, and from the high sphere of his philosophising he sinks back again into the most general, mainly because existence, as being-for-itself in general, is for him the form of all existence whatsoever.

The essential consciousness of the philosopher is separate from his own manifest knowledge, but this manifest knowledge itself, in its discourses with itself as it were about its real internal urge,

about the thought which it thinks, is conditioned, and conditioned by the principle which is the essence of his consciousness.

Philosophical historiography is not concerned either with comprehending the personality, be it even the spiritual personality of the philosopher as, in a manner of speaking, the focus and the image of his system, or still less with indulging in psychological hair-splitting and point-scoring. Its concern is to distinguish in each system the determinations themselves, the actual crystallisations pervading the whole system, from the proofs, the justifications in argument, the self-presentation of the philosophers as they know themselves; to distinguish the silent, persevering mole of real philosophical knowledge from the voluble, exoteric, variously behaving phenomenological consciousness of the subject which is the vessel and motive force of those elaborations. It is in the division of this consciousness into aspects mutually giving each other the lie that precisely its unity is proved. This *critical element* in the presentation of a philosophy which has its place in history is absolutely indispensable in order scientifically to expound a system in connection with its historical existence, a connection which must not be [over]looked precisely because the [system's] existence is historical, but which at the same time must be asserted as philosophical, and hence be developed according to its essence. Least of all must a philosophy be accepted as a philosophy by virtue of an authority or of good faith, be the authority even that of a people and the faith that of centuries. The proof can be provided only by expounding its essence. Anybody who writes the history of philosophy separates essential from unessential, exposition from content; otherwise he could only copy, hardly even translate, and still less would he be entitled to comment, cross out, etc. He would be merely a copying clerk.

The question to be asked is rather: How do the concepts of a person, of a wise man, of God, and the specific definitions of these concepts enter into the system, how are they developed out of it?

## **Cicero, On the Highest Goods and Evils**

### **Book I**

*Chap. VI.* "Let me begin ... with physics, which is his [Epicurus'] particular boast. Here, in the first place, he is quite a stranger.... Democritus believes in ... atoms, that is, bodies so solid as to be indivisible, moving about in a vacuum of infinite extent, which has neither top, bottom, nor middle, neither beginning nor end. The motion of these atoms is such that they collide and so cohere together; and from this process result the whole of the things that exist and that we see. Moreover, this movement of the atoms must not be conceived as starting from a beginning, but as having gone on from all eternity. He [Epicurus] believes that these same indivisible solid bodies are borne by their own weight perpendicularly downward, which he holds is the natural movement of all bodies; but thereupon this clever fellow, encountering the difficulty that if they all travelled downward in a straight line, and, as I said, perpendicularly, no one atom would ever be able to overtake any other atom, accordingly introduced an idea of his own invention: he said that the atom makes a very tiny swerve,-the smallest divergence possible; and so are produced entanglements and combinations and cohesions of atoms with atoms, which result in the creation of the world and all its parts, and of all that is in them.... The swerving itself is an arbitrary fiction (for Epicurus says the atoms *swerve without a cause*, and nothing is more repugnant to the physicist than to speak of something taking place uncaused).... Democritus, being an educated man and well versed in geometry, thinks the sun is of a vast size; Epicurus considers it perhaps *two feet* in diameter, for he pronounces it to be exactly as large as it appears, or a little larger or smaller. Thus where Epicurus alters the doctrines of Democritus, he alters them for the worse; while for those ideas which he adopts, the credit belongs entirely to Democritus, — the atoms, the void, the *images*, or as they call them, *eidola*, whose

impact is the cause not only of vision but also of thought; the very conception of infinite space, *apeiria* as they term it, is entirely derived from Democritus; and again the countless numbers of worlds that come into existence and pass out of existence every day”, etc.

*Chap. VII.* “Turn next to the second division of philosophy ... which is termed *lonikh*. [logic] Of the whole armour of logic your founder ... is absolutely destitute. He does away with definition; he has no doctrine of division or partition; he gives no rules for deduction or syllogistic inference, and imparts no method for solving dilemmas or for detecting fallacies of equivocation. The criteria of reality he places in sensation; once let the senses accept as true something that is false, and every possible criterion of truth and falsehood seems to him to be immediately destroyed.... He lays the very greatest stress upon that which, as he declares, nature herself decrees and rejects, that is, the feeling of pleasure and pain. These he maintains lie at the root of every act of choice and avoidance [...]:

*Chap. IX.* “[...] this Epicurus finds in pleasure; pleasure he holds to be the chief good, pain the chief evil. This he sets out to prove as follows: [301 Every animal, as soon as it is born, seeks for pleasure, and delights in it, as the chief good, while it recoils from pain as the chief evil, and so far as possible avoids it. This it does when it is not yet perverted, at the prompting of nature’s own unbiased and honest verdict. Hence he refuses to admit any necessity for argument or discussion to prove that pleasure is desirable and pain to be avoided. ... it follows that nature herself is the judge of that which is in accordance with or contrary to nature ...”.

*Chap. XI.* “So generally, the removal of pain causes pleasure to take its place. Epicurus consequently maintained that there is not such thing as a neutral state of feeling intermediate between pleasure and pain”.

*Chap. XII.* “One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, — and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement. But that *which* is not itself a swans to anything *else*, *but to which all else is a means*, is what the Greeks term the *telos*, the highest, ultimate or final good. It must *therefore be* admitted *that the chief good is to live agreeably*”.

*Chap. XIII.* “Nothing could be more useful or more conducive to well-being than Epicurus’ doctrine as to the different classes of the desires. One kind he classified as both natural and necessary, a second as natural without being necessary, and a third as neither natural nor necessary; the principle of classification being that the necessary desires are gratified with little trouble or expense; the natural desires also require but little, since nature’s own riches, which suffice to content her, are both easily procured and limited in amount; but for vain desires no bound or limit can be discovered”.

*Chap. XVIII.* “Epicurus, the man whom you denounce as a voluptuary, cries aloud that no one can live pleasantly without living wisely, honourably and justly, and no one wisely, honourably and justly, without living pleasantly. ... much less then can a n-tind divided against itself and filled with inward discord taste any particle of pure and liberal pleasure [...].”.

*Chap. XIX.* “For Epicurus thus presents his Wise Man who is always happy: his desires are kept within bounds; death he disregards; he has a true conception, untainted by fear, of the immortal gods; he does not hesitate to depart from life, if it would be better so. Thus equipped, he enjoys perpetual

pleasure, for there is no moment when the pleasures he experiences do not outbalance the pains; since he remembers the past with *gratitude, grasps the present with a full realisation of how great and pleasant it is*, and does not depend upon the future; he looks forward to it, but *finds his true enjoyment in the present ...* and he derives no inconsiderable pleasure from comparing his own existence with the life of the foolish. Moreover, any pains that the Wise Man may encounter are never so severe but that he has more cause for gladness than for sorrow. Again, it is a fine saying of Epicurus that 'the Wise Man is but little interfered with by fortune; the great concerns of life, the things that matter, are controlled by his own wisdom and reason'; and that 'no greater pleasure could be derived from a life of infinite duration that is actually afforded by this existence which we know to be finite'. Dialectics, on which your school lays such stress, he held to be of no effect either as a guide to a better life or as an aid to thought. Physics he deemed very important. ... a thorough knowledge of the facts of nature relieves us of the burden of superstition, frees us from the fear of death, and shields us against the disturbing effects of ignorance, which is often in itself a cause of terrifying apprehensions; lastly, to learn what nature's real requirements are improves the moral character also ...".

By the fact that we acknowledge that nature is reasonable, our dependence on it ceases. Nature is no longer a source of terror to our consciousness, and it is precisely Epicurus who makes the form of consciousness in its directness, the being-for-self, the form of nature. Only when nature is acknowledged as absolutely free from conscious reason and is considered as reason in itself, does it become entirely the property of reason. Any reference to it as such is at the same time alienation of it. .

*Chap. XIX.* "On the other hand, without a full understanding of the world of nature it is impossible to maintain the truth of our sense-perceptions. Furthermore, every mental presentation has its origin in sensation: so that no certain knowledge will be possible unless all sensations are true, as the theory of Epicurus teaches that they are. Those who deny the validity of sensation and say that nothing can be perceived, are unable, having excluded the evidence of the senses, even to expound their own argument.... Thus physics supplies courage to face the fear of death resolution to resist the terrors of religion

*Chap. XX.* "Now Epicurus' pronouncement about friendship is that of all the means to happiness that wisdom has devised, none is greater, none more fruitful, none more delightful than this....Epicurus well said (I give almost his exact words): 'The same knowledge that has given us courage to overcome all fear of everlasting or long-enduring evil, has discerned that friendship is our strongest safeguard in this present term of life.

*Chap. XXI.* "If then the doctrine I have set forth ... is derived entirely from nature's source; if my whole discourse relies throughout for confirmation on the unbiased and unimpeachable evidence of the senses ...".

"No! Epicurus was not uneducated: the real ignoramuses are those who ask us to go on studying till old age the subjects that we ought to be ashamed not to have learnt in boyhood".

## **Book II**

*Chap. II. op. cit.* "For he says that he does not hold with giving a definition of the thing in question [...]".

*Chap. VII.* (A passage out of the *kuriai doxai* of Epicurus.) "If the things in which sensualists find pleasure could deliver them from the fear of the gods and of death and pain, and could teach them

to set bounds to their desires, we should have no reason to blame them, since on every hand they would be abundantly supplied with pleasures, and from nowhere would be exposed to any pain or grief, that is, to evil”.

*Chap. XXVI.* “In one of your remarks I seemed to recognise a saying of Epicurus himself.-that friendship cannot be divorced from pleasure, and that it deserves to be cultivated for the reason that without it we cannot live secure and free from fear, and therefore cannot live agreeably”.

*Chap. XXXI.* “For he [Epicurus] ... stated ... that ‘death does not affect us at all; for a thing that has experienced dissolution must be devoid of sensation; and that which is devoid of sensation cannot affect us in any degree whatsoever’ [...]”.

### **Book III**

*Chap. 1.* “In fact Epicurus himself declares that there is no occasion to argue about pleasure at all [...]”.