

# Plutarch: That it is Not Possible to Live Pleasurably According to the Doctrine of Epicurus

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Plutarch's Morals. Translated from the Greek by Several Hands. Corrected and Revised by William W. Goodwin, with an Introduction by Ralph Waldo Emerson. 5 Volumes. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1878).

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First posted at EpicureanFriends 07/09/23 - this version needs cleaning up.

## 1. Plutarch: That it is Not Possible to Live Pleasurably According to the Doctrine of Epicurus

PLUTARCH, ZEUXIPPUS, THEON, ARISTODEMUS.

1. Epicurus's great confidant and familiar, Colotes, set forth a book with this title to it, that according to the tenets of the other philosophers it is impossible to live. Now what occurred to me then to say against him, in the defence of those philosophers, hath been already put into writing by me. But since upon breaking up of our lecture several things have happened to be spoken afterwards in the walks in further opposition to his party, I thought it not amiss to recollect them also, if for no other reason, yet for this one, that those who will needs be contradicting other men may see that they ought not to run cursorily over the discourses and writings of those they would disprove, nor by tearing out one word here and another there, or by falling foul upon particular passages without the books, to impose upon the ignorant and unlearned.

2. Now as we were leaving the school to take a walk (as our manner is) in the place of exercise, Zeuxippus began to us: In my opinion, said he, the debate was managed on our side with more softness and less freedom than was fitting. I am sure, Heraclides sufficiently signified his disgust at us at parting, for handling Epicurus and Metrodorus more roughly than they deserved. Yet you may remember, replied Theon, how you told them that Colotes himself, compared with the rhetoric of those two gentlemen, would appear the complaisantest man alive; for when they have raked together the lewdest terms of ignominy the tongue of man ever used, as buffooneries, trollings, arrogancies, whorings, assassinations, whining counterfeits, vile seducers, and blockheads, they faintly throw them in the faces of Aristotle, Socrates, Pythagoras, Protagoras, Theophrastus, Heraclides, Hipparchus, and which not, even of the best and most celebrated authorities. So that, should they pass for very knowing men upon all other accounts, yet their very calumnies and reviling language would bespeak them at the greatest distance from philosophy imaginable. For emulation can never enter that God-like consort, nor such fretfulness as wants resolution to conceal its own resentments. Aristodemus then subjoined: Heraclides, you know, is a great philologist; and that may be the reason why he made Epicurus those amends for the poetic din (so that party style poetry) and for the fooleries of Homer; or else, it may be, it was because Metrodorus had libelled that poet in so many books. But let us let these gentlemen pass at present, Zeuxippus, and rather return to what was charged upon the philosophers in the beginning of our discourse, that it is impossible to live according to their tenets. And I see not why we two may not despatch this affair betwixt us, with the good assistance of Theon; for I find this gentleman (meaning me) is already tired. Then Theon said to him,

Quote

Our fellows have that garland from us won;

therefore, if you please,

Let's fix another goal, and at that run.

We will even prosecute them at the suit of the philosophers, in the following form: We'll prove, if we can, that it is impossible to live a pleasurable life according to their tenets. Bless me! said I to him, smiling, you seem to me to level your foot at the very bellies of the men, and to design to enter the list with them for their lives, whilst you go about to rob them thus of their pleasure, and they cry out to you,

Quote

"Forbear, we're no good boxers, sir;

no, nor good pleaders, nor good senators, nor good magistrates either;

Our proper talent is to eat and drink,

and to excite such tender and delicate motions in our bodies as may chafe our imaginations to some jolly delight or gayety." And therefore you seem to me not so much to take off (as I may say) the pleasurable part, as to deprive the men of their very lives, while you will not leave them to live pleurably. Nay then, said Theon, if you think so well of this subject-matter, why do you not set in hand to it? By all means, said I, I am for this, and shall not only hear but answer you too, if you shall require it. But I must leave it to you to take the lead.

Then, after Theon had spoken something to excuse himself, Aristodemus said: When we had so short and fair a cut to our design, how have you blocked up the way before us, by preventing us from joining issue with the faction at the very first upon the single point of honesty! For you must grant, it can be no easy matter to drive men already possessed that pleasure is their utmost good yet to believe a life of pleasure impossible to be attained. But now the truth is, that just when they failed of living honestly they failed also of living pleurably; for to live pleurably without living honestly is even by themselves allowed inconsistent.

3. Theon then said: We may probably resume the consideration of that in the process of our discourse; in the interim we will make use of their concessions. Now they suppose their last good to lie about the belly and such other conveyances of the body as let in pleasure and not pain; and are of opinion, that all the brave and ingenious inventions that ever have been were contrived at first for the pleasure of the belly, or the good hope of compassing such pleasure, — as the sage Metrodorus informs us. By which, my good friend, it is very plain, they found their pleasure in a poor, rotten, and unsure thing, and one that is equally perforated for pains, by the very passages they receive their pleasures by; or rather indeed, that admits pleasure but by a few, but pain by all its parts. For the whole of pleasure is in a manner in the joints, nerves, feet, and hands; and these are oft the seats of very grievous and lamentable distempers, as gouts, corroding rheums, gangrenes, and putrid ulcers. And if you apply to yourself the exquisitest of perfumes or gusts, you will find but some one small part of your body is finely and delicately touched, while the rest are many times filled with anguish and complaints. Besides, there is no part of us proof against fire, sword, teeth, or scourges, or insensible of dolors and aches; yea, heats, colds, and fevers sink into all our parts alike. But pleasures, like gales of soft wind, move simpering, one towards one extreme of the body and another towards another, and then go off in a vapor. Nor are they of any long durance, but, as so many glancing meteors, they are no sooner kindled in the body than they are quenched by it. As to pain, Aeschylus's Philoctetes affords us a sufficient testimony:

Quote

The cruel viper ne'er will quit my foot; Her dire envenomed teeth have there ta'en root.

For pain will not troll off as pleasure doth, nor imitate it in its pleasing and tickling touches. But as the clover twists its perplexed and winding roots into the earth, and through its coarseness abides there a long time; so pain disperses and entangles its hooks and roots in the body, and continues there, not for a day or a night, but for several seasons of years, if not for some revolutions of Olympiads, nor scarce ever departs unless struck out by other pains, as by stronger nails. For who ever drank so long as those that are in a fever are adry? Or who was ever so long eating as those that are besieged suffer hunger? Or where are there any that are so long solaced with the conversation of friends as tyrants are racking and tormenting? Now all this is owing to the baseness of the body and its natural incapacity for a pleasurable life; for it bears pains better than it doth pleasures, and with respect to those is firm and hardy, but with respect to these is feeble and soon palled. To which add, that if we are minded to discourse on a life of pleasure, these men won't give us leave to go on, but will presently confess themselves that the pleasures of the body are but short, or rather indeed but of a moment's continuance; if they do not design to banter us or else speak out of vanity, when Metrodorus tells us, We many times spit at the pleasures of the body, and Epicurus saith, A wise man, when he is sick, many times laughs at the very extremity of his distemper.

With what consistence then can those that account the pains of the body so light and easy think so highly of its pleasures? For should we allow them not to come behind its pains either in duration or magnitude, they would not yet have their being without them. For Epicurus hath made the removal of all that pains the common definition of all pleasure; as if Nature had intended to advance the pleasurable part only to the destruction of the painful, but would not have it improved any further in magnitude, and as if she only diverted herself with certain useless diversifications after she hath once arrived to an abolition of pain. But now the passage to this, conjoined with an appetence which is the measure of pleasure, is extremely short and soon over. And therefore the sense of their narrow entertainment here hath obliged them to transplant their last end from the body, as from a poor and lean soil, to the mind, in hopes of enjoying there, as it were, large pastures and fair meadows of delights and satisfactions.

Quote

For Ithaca is no fit place For mettled steeds to run a race.

Neither can the joys of our poor bodies be smooth and equal; but on the contrary they must be coarse and harsh, and immixed with much that is displeasing and inflamed.

4. Zeuxippus then said: And do you not think then they take the right course to begin at the body, where they observe pleasure to have its first rise, and thence to pass to the mind as the more stable and sure part, there to complete and crown the whole?

They do, by Jove, I said; and if, after removing thither, they have indeed found something more consummate than before, they take a course too as well agreeing with nature as becoming men adorned with both contemplative and civil knowledge. But if after all this you still hear them cry out, and protest that the mind of man can receive no satisfaction or tranquillity from any thing under Heaven but the pleasures of the body either in possession or expectance, and that these are its proper and only good, can you forbear thinking they make use of the soul but as a funnel for the body, while they mellow their pleasure by shifting it from one vessel to another, as they rack wine out of an old and leaky vessel into a new one and there let it grow old, and then imagine they have performed some extraordinary and very fine thing? True indeed, time may both keep and recover wine that hath thus been drawn off; but the mind, receiving but the remembrance only of past pleasure, like a kind of scent, retains that and no more. For as soon as it hath given one hiss in the body, it immediately expires, and that little of it that stays behind in the memory is but flat and like a queasy fume; as if a man should lay up and treasure in his fancy what he either ate or drank yesterday, that he may have recourse to that when he wants fresh fare. See now how much more temperate the Cyrenaics are, who, though they have drunk out of the same bottle with Epicurus, yet will not allow men so much as to practise their amours by candle-light, but only under the covert of the dark, for fear seeing should fasten too quick an impression of the images of such actions upon the fancy and thereby too frequently inflame the desire. But these gentlemen account it the highest accomplishment of a philosopher to have a clear and retentive

memory of all the various figures, passions, and touches of past pleasure. We will not now say, they present us with nothing worthy the name of philosophy, while they leave the refuse of pleasure in their wise man's mind, as if it could be a lodging for bodies; but that it is impossible such things as these should make a man live pleurably, I think is abundantly manifest from hence.

For it will not perhaps seem strange if I assert, that the memory of pleasure past brings no pleasure with it if it seemed but little in the very enjoyment, or to men of such abstinence as to account it for their benefit to retire from its first approaches; when even the most amazed and sensual admirers of corporeal delights remain no longer in their gaudy and pleasant humor than their pleasure lasts them. What remains is but an empty shadow and dream of that pleasure that hath now taken wing and is fled from them, and that serves but for fuel to foment their untamed desires. Like as in those that dream they are adry or in love, their unaccomplished pleasures and enjoyments do but excite the inclination to a greater keenness. Nor indeed can the remembrance of past enjoyments afford them any real contentment at all, but must serve only, with the help of a quick desire, to raise up very much of outrage and stinging pain out of the remains of a feeble and befooling pleasure. Neither doth it befit men of continence and sobriety to exercise their thoughts about such poor things, or to do what one twitted Carneades with, to reckon, as out of a diurnal, how oft they have lain with Hedia or Leontion, or where they last drank Thasian wine, or at what twentieth-day feast they had a costly supper. For such transport and captivatedness of the mind to its own remembrances as this is would show a deplorable and bestial restlessness and raving towards the present and hoped-for acts of pleasure. And therefore I cannot but look upon the sense of these inconveniences as the true cause of their retiring at last to a freedom from pain and a firm state of body; as if living pleurably could lie in bare imagining this either past or future to some persons. True indeed it is, "that a sound state of body and a good assurance of its continuing must needs afford a most transcending and solid satisfaction to all men capable of reasoning."

5. But yet look first what work they make, while they course this same thing — whether it be pleasure, exemption from pain, or good health — up and down, first from the body to the mind, and then back again from the mind to the body, being compelled to return it to its first origin, lest it should run out and so give them the slip. Thus they pitch the pleasure of the body (as Epicurus says) upon the complacent joy in the mind, and yet conclude again with the good hopes that complacent joy hath in bodily pleasure. Indeed what wonder is it if, when the foundation shakes, the superstructure totter? Or that there should be no sure hope nor unshaken joy in a matter that suffers so great concussion and changes as continually attend a body exposed to so many violences and strokes from without, and having within it the origins of such evils as human reason cannot avert? For if it could, no understanding man would ever fall under stranguries, gripes, consumptions, or dropsies; with some of which Epicurus himself did conflict and Polyenus with others, while others of them were the deaths of Neocles and Agathobulus. And this we mention not to disparage them, knowing very well that Pherecydes and Heraclitus, both very excellent persons, labored under very uncouth and calamitous distempers. We only beg of them, if they will own their own diseases and not by noisy rants and popular harangues incur the imputation of false bravery, either not to take the health of the whole body for the ground of their content, or else not to say that men under the extremities of dolors and diseases can yet rally and be pleasant. For a sound and hale constitution of body is indeed a thing that often happens, but a firm and steadfast assurance of its continuance can never befall any intelligent mind. But as at sea (according to Aeschylus)

Night to the ablest pilot trouble brings,

and so will a calm too, for no man knows what will be,

— so likewise is it impossible for a soul that dwells in a healthful body, and that places her good in the hopes she hath of that body, to perfect her voyage here without frights or waves. For man's mind hath not, like the sea, its tempests and storms only from without it, but it also raises up from within far more and greater disturbances. And a man may with more reason look for constant fair weather in the midst of winter than for perpetual exemption from afflictions in his body. For what else hath given the poets occasion to term us creatures of a day, uncertain and unfixed, and to liken our lives to leaves that both spring and fall in the compass of a summer, but the unhappy, calamitous, and sickly condition of the body, whose very utmost good we are warned to dread and prevent? For an exquisite habit, Hippocrates saith, is slippery and

hazardous. And

Quote

He that but now looked jolly, plump, and stout, Like a star shot by Jove, is now gone out;

as it is in Euripides. And it is a vulgar persuasion, that very handsome persons, when looked upon, oft suffer damage by envy and an evil eye; for (it is said) a body at its utmost vigor will through delicacy very soon admit of changes.

6. But now that these men are miserably unprovided for an undisturbed life, you may discern even from what they themselves advance against others. For they say that those who commit wickedness and incur the displeasure of the laws live in constant misery and fear, for, though they may perhaps attain to privacy, yet it is impossible they should ever be well assured of that privacy; whence the ever-impending fear of the future will not permit them to have either complacency or assurance in their present circumstances. But they consider not how they speak all this against themselves. For a sound and healthy state of body they may indeed oftentimes possess, but that they should ever be well assured of its continuance is impossible; and they must of necessity be in constant disquiet and pain for the body with respect to futurity, never succeeding in attaining to that firm and steadfast assurance from it which they expect. But to do no wickedness will contribute nothing to our assurance; for it is not suffering justly but suffering in itself that is dismaying. Nor can it be a matter of trouble to be engaged in villanies one's self, and not afflictive to suffer by the villanies of others. Neither can it be said that the tyranny of Lachares was less, if it was not more, calamitous to the Athenians, and that of Dionysius to the Syracusans, than they were to the tyrants themselves; for it was disturbing that made them be disturbed; and their first oppressing and pestering of others gave them occasion to expect to suffer ill themselves. Why should a man recount the outrages of rabbles, the barbarities of thieves, or the villanies of inheritors, or yet the contagions of airs and the concursions of seas, by which Epicurus (as himself writeth) was in his voyage to Lampsacus within very little of drowning? The very composition of the body — it containing in it the matter of all diseases, and (to use a pleasantry of the vulgar) cutting thongs for the beast out of its own hide, I mean pains out of the body — is sufficient to render life perilous and uneasy, and that to the good as well as to the bad, if they have learned to place their complacency and assurance in the body and the hopes they have of it, and in nothing else; as Epicurus hath written, as well in many other of his discourses as in that of Man's End.

7. They therefore assign not only a treacherous and unsure ground of their pleasurable living, but also one in all respects despicable and little, if the escaping of evils be the matter of their complacency and last good. But now they tell us, nothing else can be so much as imagined, and nature hath no other place to bestow her good in but only that out of which her evil hath been driven; as Metrodorus speaks in his book against the Sophists. So that this single thing, to escape evil, he says, is the supreme good; for there is no room to lodge this good in where nothing of what is painful and afflicting goes out. Like unto this is that of Epicurus, where he saith: The very essence of good arises from the escaping of bad, and a man's recollecting, considering, and rejoicing within himself that this hath befallen him. For what occasions transcending joy (he saith) is some great impending evil escaped; and in this lies the very nature and essence of good, if a man attain unto it aright, and contain himself when he hath done, and not ramble and prate idly about it. Oh the rare satisfaction and felicity these men enjoy, that can thus rejoice for having undergone no evil and endured neither sorrow nor pain! Have they not reason, think you, to value themselves for such things as these, and to talk as they are wont when they style themselves immortals and equals to Gods? — and when, through the excessiveness and transcendency of the blessed things they enjoy, they rave even to the degree of whooping and hollowing for very satisfaction that, to the shame of all mortals, they have been the only men that could find out this celestial and divine good that lies in an exemption from all evil? So that their beatitude differs little from that of swine and sheep, while they place it in a mere tolerable and contented state, either of the body, or of the mind upon the body's account. For even the wiser and more ingenious sort of brutes do not esteem escaping of evil their last end; but when they have taken their repast, they are disposed next by fulness to singing, and they divert themselves with swimming and flying; and their gayety and sprightliness prompt them to entertain themselves with attempting to counterfeit all sorts of voices and notes; and then they make their caresses to one another, by skipping and dancing one towards another; nature inciting them, after they have escaped evil, to look after some good, or rather to shake off what they find uneasy and

disagreeing, as an impediment to their pursuit of something better and more congenial.

8. For what we cannot be without deserves not the name of good; but that which claims our desire and preference must be something beyond a bare escape from evil. And so, by Jove, must that be too that is either agreeing or congenial to us, according to Plato, who will not allow us to give the name of pleasures to the bare departures of sorrows and pains, but would have us look upon them rather as obscure draughts and mixtures of agreeing and disagreeing, as of black and white, while the extremes would advance themselves to a middle temperament. But oftentimes unskilfulness and ignorance of the true nature of the extreme occasions some to mistake the middle temperament for the extreme and outmost part. Thus do Epicurus and Metrodorus, while they make avoiding of evil to be the very essence and consummation of good, and so receive but as it were the satisfaction of slaves or of rogues newly discharged the gaol, who are well enough contented if they may but wash and supple their sores and the stripes they received by whipping, but never in their lives had one taste or sight of a generous, clean, unmixed, and unulcerated joy. For it follows not that, if it be vexatious to have one's body itch or one's eyes to run, it must be therefore a blessing to scratch one's self, and to wipe one's eye with a rag; nor that, if it be bad to be dejected or dismayed at divine matters or to be discomposed with the relations of hell, therefore the bare avoiding of all this must be some happy and amiable thing. The truth is, these men's opinion, though it pretends so far to outgo that of the vulgar, allows their joy but a straight and narrow compass to toss and tumble in, while it extends it but to an exemption from the fear of hell, and so makes that the top of acquired wisdom which is doubtless natural to the brutes. For if freedom from bodily pain be still the same, whether it come by endeavor or by nature, neither then is an undisturbed state of mind the greater for being attained to by industry than if it came by nature. Though a man may with good reason maintain that to be the more confirmed habit of the mind which naturally admits of no disorder, than that which by application and judgment eschews it.

But let us suppose them both equal; they will yet appear not one jot superior to the beasts for being unconcerned at the stories of hell and the legends of the Gods, and for not expecting endless sorrows and everlasting torments hereafter. For it is Epicurus himself that tells us that, had our surmises about celestial things and our foolish apprehensions of death and the pains that ensue it given us no disquiet, we had not then needed to contemplate nature for our relief. For neither have the brutes any weak surmises of the Gods or fond opinions about things after death to disorder themselves with; nor have they as much as imagination or notion that there is any thing in these to be dreaded. I confess, had they left us the benign providence of God as a presumption, wise men might then seem, by reason of their good hopes from thence, to have something towards a pleasurable life that beasts have not. But now, since they have made it the scope of all their discourses of God that they may not fear him, but may be eased of all concern about him, I much question whether those that never thought at all of him have not this in a more confirmed degree than they that have learned to think he can do no harm. For if they were never freed from superstition, they never fell into it; and if they never laid aside a disturbing conceit of God, they never took one up. The like may be said as to hell and the future state. For though neither the Epicurean nor the brute can hope for any good thence; yet such as have no forethought of death at all cannot but be less amused and scared with what comes after it than they that betake themselves to the principle that [death is nothing to us](#). But something to them it must be, at least so far as they concern themselves to reason about it and contemplate it; but the beasts are wholly exempted from thinking of what appertains not to them; and if they fly from blows, wounds, and slaughters, they fear no more in death than is dismaying to the Epicurean himself.

9. Such then are the things they boast to have attained by their philosophy. Let us now see what those are they deprive themselves of and chase away from them. For those diffusions of the mind that arise from the body, and the pleasing condition of the body, if they be but moderate, appear to have nothing in them that is either great or considerable; but if they be excessive, besides their being vain and uncertain, they are also importune and petulant; nor should a man term them either mental satisfactions or gayeties, but rather corporeal gratifications, they being at best but the simperings and effeminacies of the mind. But now such as justly deserve the names of complacencies and joys are wholly refined from their contraries, and are immixed with neither vexation, remorse, nor repentance; and their good is congenial to the mind and truly mental and genuine, and not superinduced. Nor is it devoid of reason, but most rational, as springing either from that in the mind that is contemplative and enquiring, or else from that part of it that is active and heroic. How many

and how great satisfactions either of these affords us, he that would can never relate. But to hint briefly at some of them. We have the historians before us, which, though they find us many and delightful exercises, still leave our desire after truth insatiate and uncloyed with pleasure, through which even lies are not without their grace. Yea, tales and poetic fictions, while they cannot gain upon our belief, have something in them that is charming to us.

10. For do but think with yourself, with what a sting we read Plato's Atlantic and the conclusion of the Iliad, and how we hanker and gape after the rest of the tale, as when some beautiful temple or theatre is shut up. But now the informing of ourselves with the truth herself is a thing so delectable and lovely as if our very life and being were for the sake of knowing. And the darkest and grimmest things in death are its oblivion, ignorance, and obscurity. Whence, by Jove, it is that almost all mankind encounter with those that would destroy the sense of the departed, as placing the very whole of their life, being, and satisfaction solely in the sensible and knowing part of the mind. For even the things that grieve and afflict us yet afford us a sort of pleasure in the hearing. And it is often seen that those that are disordered by what is told them, even to the degree of weeping, notwithstanding require the telling of it. So he in the tragedy who is told,

Alas! I now the very worst must tell,

replies,

I dread to hear it too, but I must hear.

But this may seem perhaps a sort of intemperateness of delight in knowing every thing, and as it were a stream violently bearing down the reasoning faculty. But now, when a story that hath in it nothing that is troubling and afflictive treats of great and heroic enterprises with a potency and grace of style such as we find in Herodotus's Grecian and in Xenophon's Persian history, or in what,

Inspired by heavenly Gods, sage Homer sung,

or in the Travels of Eudoxus, the Foundations and Republics of Aristotle, and the Lives of Famous Men compiled by Aristoxenus; — these will not only bring us exceeding much and great contentment, but such also as is clean and secure from repentance. And who could take greater satisfaction either in eating when a-hungry or drinking when a-dry amongst the Phaeacians, than in going over Ulysses's relation of his own voyage and rambles? And what man could be better pleased with the embraces of the most exquisite beauty, than with sitting up all night to read over what Xenophon hath written of Panthea, or Aristobulus of Timoclea, or Theopompus of Thebe?

11. But now these appertain all solely to the mind. But they chase away from them the delights that accrue from the mathematics also. Though the satisfactions we receive from history have in them something simple and equal, but those that come from geometry, astronomy, and music inveigle and allure us with a sort of nimbleness and variety, and want nothing that is tempting and engaging; their figures attracting us as so many charms, whereof whoever hath once tasted, if he be but competently skilled, will run about singing that in Sophocles,

Quote

I'm mad; the Muses with new rage inspire me. I'll mount the hill; my lyre, my numbers fire me.

Nor doth Thamyras break out into poetic raptures upon any other score; nor, by Jove, Eudoxus, Aristarchus, or Archimedes. And when the lovers of the art of painting are so enamored with the charmingness of their own performances, that Nicias, as he was drawing the Evocation of Ghosts in Homer, often asked his servants whether he had dined or no, and when King Ptolemy had sent him threescore talents for his piece, after it was finished, he neither would accept the money nor part with his work; what and how great satisfactions may we then suppose to have been reaped from geometry and astronomy by Euclid when he wrote his Dioptrics, by Philippus when he had perfected his demonstration of the figure of the moon, by Archimedes when with the help of a certain angle he had found the sun's diameter to make the same part of the largest circle that that angle made of four right angles, and by Apollonius and Aristarchus who were the

inventors of some other things of the like nature? The bare contemplating and comprehending of these now engender in the learners both unspeakable delights and a marvellous height of spirit. And it doth in no wise beseem me, by comparing with these the fulsome debauchees of victualling-houses and stews, to contaminate Helicon and the Muses, —

Quote

Where swain his flock ne'er fed, Nor tree by hatchet bled.

But these are the verdant and untrampled pastures of ingenious bees; but those are more like the mangle of lecherous boars and he-goats. And though a voluptuous temper of mind be naturally fantastic and precipitate, yet never any yet sacrificed an ox for joy that he had gained his will of his mistress; nor did any ever wish to die immediately, might he but once satiate himself with the costly dishes and comfits at the table of his prince. But now Eudoxus wished he might stand by the sun, and inform himself of the figure, magnitude, and beauty of that luminary, though he were, like Phaethon, consumed by it. And Pythagoras offered an ox in sacrifice for having completed the lines of a certain geometric diagram; as Apollodotus tells us,

Quote

When the famed lines Pythagoras devised, For which a splendid ox he sacrificed.

Whether it was that by which he showed that the [square of the] line that regards the right angle in a triangle is equivalent to the [squares of the] two lines that contain that angle, or the problem about the area of the parabolic section of a cone. And Archimedes's servants were forced to hale him away from his draughts, to be anointed in the bath; but he notwithstanding drew the lines upon his belly with his strigil. And when, as he was washing (as the story goes of him), he thought of a manner of computing the proportion of gold in King Hiero's crown by seeing the water flowing over the bathing-stool, he leaped up as one possessed or inspired, crying, "I have found it" (??????); which after he had several times repeated, he went his way. But we never yet heard of a glutton that exclaimed with such vehemence, "I have eaten," or of an amorous gallant that ever cried, "I have kissed," among the many millions of dissolute debauchees that both this and preceding ages have produced. Yea, we abominate those that make mention of their great suppers with too luscious a gust, as men overmuch taken with mean and abject delights. But we find ourselves in one and the same ecstasy with Eudoxus, Archimedes, and Hipparchus; and we readily give assent to Plato when he saith of the mathematics, that while ignorance and unskilledness make men despise them, they still thrive notwithstanding by reason of their charming ness, in despite of contempt.

12. These then so great and so many pleasures, that run like perpetual springs and rills, these men decline and avoid; nor will they permit those that put in among them so much as to take a taste of them, but bid them hoist up the little sails of their paltry cock-boats and fly from them. Nay, they all, both he and she philosophers, beg and entreat Pythocles, for dear Epicurus's sake, not to affect or make such account of the sciences called liberal. And when they cry up and defend one Apelles, they write of him that he kept himself clean by refraining himself all along from the mathematics. But as to history — to pass over their aversedness to other kinds of compositions — I shall only present you with the words of Metrodorus, who in his treatise of the Poets writes thus: Wherefore let it never disturb you, if you know not either what side Hector was of, or the first verses in Homer's Poem, or again what is in its middle. But that the pleasures of the body spend themselves like the winds called Etesian or Anniversary, and utterly determine when once age is past its vigor, Epicurus himself was not insensible; and there fore he makes it a problematic question, whether a sage philosopher, when he is an old man and disabled for enjoyment, may not still be recreated with having handsome girls to feel and grope him, being not, it seems, of the mind of old Sophocles, who thanked God he had at length escaped from this kind of pleasure, as from an untame and furious master. But, in my opinion, it would be more advisable for these sensual lechers, when they see that age will dry up so many of their pleasures, and that, as Euripides saith,

Dame Venus is to ancient men a foe,

in the first place to collect and lay up in store, as against a siege, these other pleasures, as a sort of provision that will not impair and decay; that then, after they have celebrated the venereal festivals of life, they may



spend a cleanly after feast in reading over the historians and poets, or else in problems of music and geometry. For it would never have come into their minds so much as to think of these purblind and toothless gropings and spurtings of lechery, had they but learned, if nothing more, to write comments upon Homer or Euripides, as Aristotle, Heraclides, and Dicaearchus did. But I verily persuade myself that their neglecting to take care for such provisions as these, and finding all the other things they employed themselves in (as they use to say of virtue) but insipid and dry, and being wholly set upon pleasure, and the body no longer supplying them with it, give them occasion to stoop to do things both mean and shameful in themselves and unbecoming their age; as well when they refresh their memories with their former pleasures and serve themselves of old ones (as it were) long since dead and laid up in pickle for the purpose, when they cannot have fresh ones, as when again they offer violence to nature by suscitating and kindling in their decayed bodies, as in cold embers, other new ones equally senseless, they having not, it seems, their minds stored with any congenial pleasure that is worth the rejoicing at.

13. As to the other delights of the mind, we have already treated of them, as they occurred to us. But their aversedness and dislike to music, that affords us so great delights and such charming satisfactions, a man could not forget if he would, by reason of the inconsistency of what Epicurus saith, when he pronounceth in his book called his Doubts that his wise man ought to be a lover of public spectacles and to delight above any other man in the music and shows of the Bacchanals; and yet he will not admit of music problems or of the critical enquiries of philologists, no, not so much as at a computation. Yea, he advises such princes as are lovers of the Muses rather to entertain themselves at their feasts either with some narration of military adventures or with the importune scurrilities of drolls and buffoons, than to engage in disputes about music or in questions of poetry. For this very thing he had the face to write in his treatise of Monarchy, as if he were writing to Sardanapalus, or to Nanarus satrap of Babylon. For neither would a Hiero nor an Attalus nor an Archelaus be persuaded to make a Euripides, a Simonides, a Melanippides, a Crates, or a Diodotus rise up from their tables, and to place such scaramuchios in their rooms as a Cardax, an Agrias, or a Callias, or fellows like Thrasonides and Thrasyleon, to make people disorder the house with hollowing and clapping. Had the great Ptolemy, who was the first that formed a consort of musicians, but met with these excellent and royal admonitions, would he not, think you, have thus addressed himself to the Samians:

O Muse, whence art thou thus maligned?

For certainly it can never belong to any Athenian to be in such enmity and hostility with the Muses. But

Quote

No animal accurst by Jove Music's sweet charms can ever love.

What sayest thou now, Epicurus? Wilt thou get thee up betimes in the morning, and go to the theatre to hear the harpers and flutists play? But if a Theophrastus discourse at the table of Concorde, or an Aristoxenus of Varieties, or if an Aristophanes play the critic upon Homer, wilt thou presently, for very dislike and abhorrence clap both thy hands upon thy ears? And do they not hereby make the Scythian king Ateas more musical than this comes to, who, when he heard that admirable flutist Ismenias, detained then by him as a prisoner of war, playing upon the flute at a computation, swore he had rather hear his own horse neigh? And do they not also profess themselves to stand at an implacable and irreconcilable defiance with whatever is generous and becoming? And indeed what do they ever embrace or affect that is either genteel or regardable, when it hath nothing of pleasure to accompany it? And would it not far less affect a pleasurable way of living, to be disgusted with perfumes and odors, like beetles and vultures, than to shun and abhor the conversation of learned critics and musicians? For what flute or harp ready tuned for a lesson, or

Quote

What sweetest consort e'er with artful noise, Warbled by softest tongue and best tuned voice,

ever gave Epicurus and Metrodorus such content as the disputes and precepts about consorts gave Aristotle, Theophrastus, Hieronymus, and Dicaearchus? And also the problems about flutes, rhythms, and harmonies; as, for instance, why the slenderer of two flutes of the same longitude should speak flatter? — why, if you raise the pipe, will all its notes be sharp; and flat again, if you lower it? — and why, when clapped to another,

will it sound flatter; and sharper again, when taken from it? — why also, if you scatter chaff or dust about the orchestra of a theatre, will the sound be softened? — and why, when one would have set up a bronze Alexander for a frontispiece to a stage at Pella, did the architect advise to the contrary, because it would spoil the actors' voices? — and why, of the several kinds of music, will the chromatic diffuse and the harmonic compose the mind? But now the several humors of poets, their differing turns and forms of style, and the solutions of their difficult places, have conjoined with a sort of dignity and politeness somewhat also that is extremely agreeable and charming; insomuch that to me they seem to do what was once said by Xenophon, to make a man even forget the joys of love, so powerful and overcoming is the pleasure they bring us.

14. Of all this these gentlemen have not the least share, nor do they so much as pretend or desire to have any. But while they are sinking and depressing their contemplative part into the body, and dragging it down by their sensual and intemperate appetites, as by so many weights of lead, they make themselves appear little better than hostlers or graziers that still ply their cattle with hay, straw, or grass, looking upon such provender as the properest and meetest food for them. And is it not even thus they would swill the mind with the pleasures of the body, as hogherds do their swine, while they will not allow it can be gay any longer than it is hoping, feeling, or remembering something that refers to the body; but will not have it either to receive or seek for any congenial joy or satisfaction from within itself? Though what can be more absurd and unreasonable than — when there are two things that go to make up the man, a body and a soul, and the soul besides hath the prerogative of governing — that the body should have its peculiar, natural, and proper good, and the soul none at all, but must sit gazing at the body and simper at its passions, as if she were pleased and affected with them, though indeed she be all the while wholly untouched and unconcerned, as having nothing of her own to choose, desire, or take delight in? For they should either pull off the vizor quite, and say plainly that man is all body (as some of them do, that take away all mental being), or, if they will allow us to have two distinct natures, they should then leave to each its proper good and evil, agreeable and disagreeable, as we find it to be with our senses, each of which is peculiarly adapted to its own sensible, though they all very strangely intercommune one with another. Now the intellect is the proper sense of the mind; and therefore that it should have no congenial speculation, movement, or affection of its own, the attaining to which should be matter of complacency to it, is the most irrational thing in the world, if I have not, by Jove, unwittingly done the men wrong, and been myself imposed upon by some that may perhaps have caluminated them.

15. Then I said to him: If we may be your judges, you have not; yea, we must acquit you of having offered them the least indignity; and therefore pray despatch the rest of your discourse with assurance. How! said he, and shall not Aristodemus then succeed me, if you are tired out yourself? Aristodemus said: With all my heart, when you are as much tired as he is; but since you are yet in your vigor, pray make use of yourself, my noble friend, and don't think to pretend weariness. Theon then replied: What is yet behind, I must confess, is very easy; it being but to go over the several pleasures contained in that part of life that consists in action. Now themselves somewhere say that there is far more satisfaction in doing than in receiving good; and good may be done many times, it is true, by words, but the most and greatest part of good consists in action, as the very name of beneficence tells us and they themselves also attest. For you may remember, continued he, we heard this gentleman tell us but now what words Epicurus uttered, and what letters he sent to his friends, applauding and magnifying Metrodorus, — how bravely and like a spark he quitted the city and went down to the port to relieve Mithrus the Syrian, — and this, though Metrodorus did not then do any thing at all. What and how great then may we presume the pleasures of Plato to have been, when Dion by the measures he gave him deposed the tyrant Dionysius and set Sicily at liberty? And what the pleasures of Aristotle, when he rebuilt his native city Stagira, then levelled with the ground, and brought back its exiled inhabitants? And what the pleasures of Theophrastus and of Phidias, when they cut off the tyrants of their respective countries? For what need a man recount to you, who so well know it, how many particular persons they relieved, not by sending them a little wheat or a measure of meal (as Epicurus did to some of his friends), but by procuring restoration to the banished, liberty to the imprisoned, and restitution of wives and children to those that had been bereft of them? But a man could not, if he would, pass by the sottish stupidity of the man who, though he tramples under foot and vilifies the great and generous actions of Themistocles and Miltiades, yet writes these very words to his friends about himself: "You have given a very gallant and noble testimony of your care of me in the provision of corn you have made for me, and have declared your affection to me by signs

that mount to the very skies.” So that, should a man but take that poor parcel of corn out of the great philosopher’s epistle, it might seem to be the recital of some letter of thanks for the delivery or preservation of all Greece or of the commons of Athens.

16. We will now forbear to mention that Nature requires very large and chargeable provisions to be made for accomplishing the pleasures of the body; nor can the height of delicacy be had in barley bread and lentil pottage. But voluptuous and sensual appetites expect costly dishes, Thasian wines, perfumed unguents, and varieties of pastry works,

Quote

And cakes by female hands wrought artfully, Well steep’d in th’ liquor of the gold-wing’d bee;

and besides all this, handsome young lassies too, such as Leontion, Boidion, Hedia, and Nicedion, that were wont to roam about in Epicurus’s philosophic garden. But now such joys as suit the mind must undoubtedly be grounded upon a grandeur of actions and a splendor of worthy deeds, if men would not seem little, ungenerous, and puerile, but on the contrary, bulky, firm, and brave. But for a man to be elated with pleasures, as Epicurus is, like tarpaulins upon the festivals of Venus, and to vaunt himself that, when he was sick of an ascites, he notwithstanding called his friends together to certain collations and grudged not his dropsy the satisfaction of good liquors, and that, when he called to remembrance the last words of Neocles, he was melted with a peculiar sort of joy intermixed with tears, — no man in his right senses would call these true joys or satisfactions. Nay, I will be bold to say that, if such a thing as that they call a sardonic or grinning laughter can happen to the mind, it is to be found in these forcings and crying laughters. But if any will needs have them still called by the name of joys and satisfactions, let him but yet think how far they are exceeded by the pleasures that here ensue:

Our counsels have proud Sparta’s glory clipt;

and

Stranger, this is his country Rome’s great star;

and again this,

I know not which to guess thee, man or God.

Now when I set before my eyes the brave achievements of Thrasybulus and Pelopidas, of Aristides engaged at Plataea and Miltiades at Marathon, I am here constrained with Herodotus to declare it my opinion, that in an active state of life the pleasure far exceeds the glory. And Epaminondas herein bears me witness also, when he saith (as is reported of him), that the greatest satisfaction he ever received in his life was that his father and mother had lived to see the trophy set up at Leuctra when himself was general. Let us then compare with Epaminondas’s Epicurus’s mother, rejoicing that she had lived to see her son cooping himself up in a little garden, and getting children in common with Polyaeus upon the strumpet of Cyzicus. As for Metrodorus’s mother and sister, how extravagantly rejoiced they were at his nuptials appears by the letters he wrote to his brother in answer to his; that is, out of his own books. Nay, they tell us bellowing that they have not only lived a life of pleasure, but also exult and sing hymns in the praise of their own living. Now, when our servants celebrate the festivals of Saturn or go in procession at the time of the rural bacchanals, you would scarcely brook the hollowing and din they make, should the intemperateness of their joy and their insensibleness of decorum make them act and speak such things as these:

Quote

Lean down, boy! why dost sit! let’s tope like mad! Here’s belly-timber store; ne’er spare it, lad. Straight these huzza like wild. One fills up drink; Another plaits a wreath, and crowns the brink O’ th’ teeming bowl. Then to the verdant bays All chant rude carols in Apollo’s praise; While one his door with drunken fury smites, Till he from bed his pretty consort frights.

And are not Metrodorus's words something like to these when he writes to his brother thus: It is none of our business to preserve the Greeks, or to get them to bestow garlands upon us for our wit, but to eat well and drink good wine, Timocrates, so as not to offend but pleasure our stomachs. And he saith again, in some other place in the same epistles: How gay and how assured was I, when I had once learned of Epicurus the true way of gratifying my stomach; for, believe me, philosopher Timocrates, our prime good lies at the stomach.

17. In brief, these men draw out the dimensions of their pleasures like a circle, about the stomach as a centre. And the truth is, it is impossible for those men ever to participate of generous and princely joy, such as enkindles a height of spirit in us and sends forth to all mankind an unmade hilarity and calm serenity, that have taken up a sort of life that is confined, unsocial, inhuman, and uninspired towards the esteem of the world and the love of mankind. For the soul of man is not an abject, little, and ungenerous thing, nor doth it extend its desires (as polyps do their claws) unto eatables only, — yea, these are in an instant of time taken off by the least plenitude, — but when its efforts towards what is brave and generous and the honors and caresses that accrue therefrom are now in their consummate vigor, this life's duration cannot limit them, but the desire of glory and the love of mankind grasp at whole eternity, and wrestle with such actions and charms as bring with them an ineffable pleasure, and such as good men, though never so fain, cannot decline, they meeting and accosting them on all sides and surrounding them about, while their being beneficial to many occasions joy to themselves.

Quote

As he passes through the throngs in the city, All gaze upon him as some Deity.

For he that can so affect and move other men as to fill them with joy and rapture, and to make them long to touch him and salute him, cannot but appear even to a blind man to possess and enjoy very extraordinary satisfactions in himself. And hence it comes that such men are both indefatigable and undaunted in serving the public, and we still hear some such words from them:

Thy father got thee for the common good;

and

Let's not give off to benefit mankind.

But what need I instance in those that are consummately good? For if to one of the middling rank of bad men, when he is just a dying, he that hath the power over him (whether his God or prince) should but allow one hour more, upon condition that, after he hath spent that either in some generous action or in sensual enjoyment, he should then presently die, who would in this time choose rather to accompany with Lais or drink Ariusian wine, than to despatch Archias and restore the Thebans to their liberties? For my part I believe none would. For I see that even common sword-players, if they are not utter brutes and savages, but Greek born, when they are to enter the list, though there be many and very costly dishes set before them, yet take more content in employing their time in commending their poor wives to some of their friends, yea, and in conferring freedom on their slaves, than in gratifying their stomachs. But should the pleasures of the body be allowed to have some extraordinary matter in them, this would yet be common to men of action and business.

For they can eat good meat, and red wine drink,

aye, and entertain themselves with their friends, and perhaps with a greater relish too, after their engagements and hard services, — as did Alexander and Agesilaus, and (by Jove) Phocion and Epaminondas too, — than these gentlemen who anoint themselves by the fireside, and are gingerly rocked about the streets in sedans. Yea, those make but small account of such pleasures as these, as being comprised in those greater ones. For why should a man mention Epaminondas's denying to sup with one, when he saw the preparations made were above the man's estate, but frankly telling his friend, "I thought you had intended a sacrifice and not a debauch," when Alexander himself refused Queen Ada's cooks, telling her he had better ones of his own, to wit, travelling by night for his dinner, and a light dinner for his supper, and

when Philoxenus writing to him about some handsome boys, and desiring to know of him whether he would have him buy them for him, was within a small matter of being discharged his office for it? And yet who might better have them than he? But as Hippocrates saith that of two pains the lesser is obscured by the greater, so the pleasures that accrue from action and the love of glory, while they cheer and refresh the mind, do by their transcendency and grandeur obliterate and extinguish the inferior satisfactions of the body.

18. If then the remembering of former good things (as they affirm) be that which most contributes to a pleasurable living, not one of us will then credit Epicurus when he tells us that, while he was dying away in the midst of the strongest agonies and distempers, he yet bore himself up with the memory of the pleasures he formerly enjoyed. For a man may better see the resemblance of his own face in a troubled deep or a storm, than a smooth and smiling remembrance of past pleasure in a body tortured with such lancing and rending pains. But now the memories of past actions no man can put from him that would. For did Alexander, think you, (or indeed could he possibly) forget the fight at Arbela? Or Pelopidas the tyrant Leontiadas? Or Themistocles the engagement at Salamis? For the Athenians to this very day keep an annual festival for the battle at Marathon, and the Thebans for that at Leuctra; and so, by Jove, do we ourselves (as you very well know) for that which Daiphantus gained at Hyampolis, and all Phocis is filled with sacrifices and public honors. Nor is there any of us that is better satisfied with what himself hath either eaten or drunk than he is with what they have achieved. It is very easy then to imagine what great content, satisfaction, and joy accompanied the authors of these actions in their lifetime, when the very memory of them hath not yet after five hundred years and more lost its rejoicing power. The truth is, Epicurus himself allows there are some pleasures derived from fame. And indeed why should he not, when he himself had such a furious lechery and wriggling after glory as made him not only to disown his masters and scuffle about syllables and accents with his fellow-pedant Democritus (whose doctrines he stole verbatim), and to tell his disciples there never was a wise man in the world besides himself, but also to put it in writing how Colotes performed adoration to him, as he was one day philosophizing, by touching his knees, and that his own brother Neocles was used from a child to say, "There neither is, nor ever was in the world, a wiser man than Epicurus," and that his mother had just so many atoms within her as, when they came together, must have produced a complete wise man? May not a man then — as Callicratidas once said of the Athenian admiral Conon, that he whored the sea — as well say of Epicurus that he basely and covertly forces and ravishes Fame, by not enjoying her publicly but ruffling and debauching her in a corner? For as men's bodies are oft necessitated by famine, for want of other food, to prey against nature upon themselves, a like mischief to this does vain-glory create in men's minds, forcing them, when they hunger after praise and cannot obtain it from other men, at last to commend themselves.

19. And do not they then that stand so well affected towards applause and fame themselves own they cast away very extraordinary pleasures, when they decline magistrature, public offices, and the favor and confidences of princes, from whom Democritus once said the grandest blessings of human life are derived? For he will never induce any mortal to believe, that he that could so highly value and please himself with the attestation of his brother Neocles and the adoration of his friend Colotes would not, were he clapped by all the Greeks at the Olympiads, go quite out of his wits and even hollow for joy, or rather indeed be elated in the manner spoken of by Sophocles,

Puffed like the down of a gray-headed thistle.

If it be a pleasing thing then to be of a good fame, it is on the contrary afflictive to be of an ill one; and it is most certain that nothing in the world can be more infamous than want of friendship, idleness, atheism, debauchery, and negligence. Now these are looked upon by all men except themselves as inseparable companions of their party. But unjustly, some one may say. Be it so then; for we consider not now the truth of the charge, but what fame and reputation they are of in the world. And we shall forbear at present to mention the many books that have been written to defame them, and the blackening decrees made against them by several republics; for that would look like bitterness. But if the answers of oracles, the providence of the Gods, and the tenderness and affection of parents to their issue, — if civil policy, military order, and the office of magistracy be things to be looked upon as deservedly esteemed and celebrated, it must of necessity then be allowed also, that they that tell us it is none of their business to preserve the Greeks, but they must eat and drink so as not to offend but pleasure their stomachs, are base and ignominious persons, and that their

being reputed such must needs extremely humble them and make their lives untoward to them, if they take honor and a good name for any part of their satisfaction.

20. When Theon had thus spoken, we thought good to break up our walk to rest us awhile (as we were wont to do) upon the benches. Nor did we continue any long space in our silence at what was spoken; for Zeuxippus, taking his hint from what had been said, spake to us: Who will make up that of the discourse which is yet behind? For it hath not yet received its due conclusion; and this gentleman, by mentioning divination and providence, did in my opinion suggest as much to us; for these people boast that these very things contribute in no small degree to the providing of their lives with pleasure, serenity, and assurance; so that there must be something said to these too. Aristodemus subjoined then and said: As to pleasure, I think there hath been enough said already to evince that, supposing their doctrine to be successful and to attain its own design, it yet doth but ease us of fear and a certain superstitious persuasion, but helps us not to any comfort or joy from the Gods at all; nay, while it brings us to such a state as to be neither disquieted nor pleased with them, it doth but render us in the same manner affected towards them as we are towards the Scythians or Hyrcanians, from whom we expect neither good nor harm. But if something more must yet be added to what hath been already spoken, I think I may very well take it from themselves. And in the first place, they quarrel extremely with those that would take away all sorrowing, weeping, and sighing for the death of friends, and tell them that such unconcernedness as arrives to an insensibility proceeds from some other worse cause, to wit, inhumanity, excessive vain-glory, or prodigious fierceness, and that therefore it would be better to be a little concerned and affected, yea, and to liquor one's eyes and be melted, with other pretty things of the like kind, which they use foppishly to affect and counterfeit, that they may be thought tender and loving-hearted people. For just in this manner Epicurus expressed himself upon the occasion of the death of Hegesianax, when he wrote to Dositheus the father and to Pyrson the brother of the deceased person; for I fortun'd very lately to run over his epistles. And I say, in imitation of them, that atheism is no less an evil than inhumanity and vain-glory, and into this they would lead us who take away with God's anger the comfort we might derive from him. For it would be much better for us to have something of the unsuiting passion of dauntedness and fear conjoined and intermixed with our sentiments of a Deity, than while we fly from it, to leave ourselves neither hope, comfort, nor assurance in the enjoyment of our good things, nor any recourse to God in our adversity and misfortunes.

21. We ought, it is true, to remove superstition from the persuasion we have of the Gods, as we would the gum from our eyes; but if that be impossible, we must not root out and extinguish with it the belief which the most have of the Gods; nor is that a dismaying and sour one either, as these gentlemen feign, while they libel and abuse the blessed Providence, representing her as a hobgoblin or as some fell and tragic fury. Yea, I must tell you, there are some in the world that fear God in an excess, for whom yet it would not be better not so to fear him. For, while they dread him as a governor that is gentle to the good and severe to the bad, and are by this one fear, which makes them not to need many others, freed from doing ill and brought to keep their wickedness with them in quiet and (as it were) in an enfeebled languor, they come hereby to have less disquiet than those that indulge the practice of it and are rash and daring in it, and then presently after fear and repent of it. Now that disposition of mind which the greater and ignorant part of mankind, that are not utterly bad, are of towards God, hath, it is very true, conjoined with the regard and honor they pay him, a kind of anguish and astonished dread, which is also called superstition; but ten thousand times more and greater than this are the good hope and true joy that attend it, which both implore and receive the whole benefit of prosperity and good success from the Gods only. And this is manifest by the greatest tokens that can be; for neither do the discourses of those that wait at the temples; nor the good times of our solemn festivals, nor any other actions or sights more recreate and delight us than what we see and do about the Gods ourselves, while we assist at the public ceremonies, and join in the sacred balls, and attend at the sacrifices and initiations. For the mind is not then sorrowful, demiss, and heavy, as she would be if she were addressing to certain tyrants or cruel torturers; but on the contrary, where she is most apprehensive and fullest persuaded the Divinity is present, there she most of all throws off sorrows, tears, and pensiveness, and lets herself loose to what is pleasing and agreeable, to the very degree of tipsiness, frolic, and laughter. In amorous concerns, as the poet said once,

Quote

When old man and old wife think of love's fires, Their frozen breasts will swell with new desires;

but now in the public processions and sacrifices not only the old man and the old wife, nor yet the poor and mean man only, but also

The dusty thick-legged drab that turns the mill,

and household-slaves and day-laborers, are strangely elevated and transported with mirth and jovialty. Rich men as well as princes are used at certain times to make public entertainments and to keep open houses; but the feasts they make at the solemnities and sacrifices, when they now apprehend their minds to approach nearest the Divinity, have conjoined with the honor and veneration which they pay him a much more transcending pleasure and satisfaction. Of this, he that hath renounced God's providence hath not the least share; for what recreates and cheers us at the festivals is not the store of good wine and roast meat, but the good hope and persuasion that God is there present and propitious to us, and kindly accepts of what we do. From some of our festivals we exclude the flute and garland; but if God be not present at the sacrifice, as the solemnity of the banquet, the rest is but unhallowed, unfeast-like, and uninspired. Indeed the whole is but ungrateful and irksome to such a man; for he asks for nothing at all, but only acts his prayers and adorations for fear of the public, and utters expressions contradictory to his philosophy. And when he sacrifices, he stands by and looks upon the priest as he kills the offering but as he doth upon a butcher; and when he hath done, he goes his way, saying with Menander,

Quote

To bribe the Gods I sacrificed my best, But they ne'er minded me nor my request.

For such a mien Epicurus would have us to put on, and neither to envy nor to incur the hatred of the common sort by doing ourselves with displeasure what others do with delight. For, as Evenus saith,

No man can love what he is made to do.

For which very reason they think the superstitious are not pleased in their minds but in fear while they attend at the sacrifices and mysteries; though they themselves are in no better condition, if they do the same things out of fear, and partake not either of as great good hope as the others do, but are only fearful and uneasy lest they should come to be discovered cheating and abusing the public, upon whose account it is that they compose the books they write about the Gods and the Divine Nature,

Quote

Involved, with nothing truly said, But all around enveloped;

hiding out of fear the real opinions they contain.

22. And now, after the two former ranks of ill and common men, we will in the third place consider the best sort and most beloved of the Gods, and what great satisfactions they receive from their clean and generous sentiments of the Deity, to wit, that he is the Prince of all good things and the Parent of all things brave, and can no more do an unworthy thing than he can be made to suffer it. For he is good, and he that is good can upon no account fall into envy, fear, anger, or hatred; for it is not proper to a hot thing to cool, but to heat; nor to a good thing to do harm. Now anger is by nature at the farthest distance imaginable from complacency, and spleenishness from placidness, and animosity and turbulence from humanity and kindness. For the latter of these proceed from generosity and fortitude, but the former from impotency and baseness. The Deity is not therefore constrained by either anger or kindnesses; but that is because it is natural to it to be kind and aiding, and unnatural to be angry and hurtful. But the great Jove, whose mansion is in heaven and who drives his winged chariot, is the first that descends downwards and orders all things and takes the care of them. But of the other Gods one is surnamed the Distributer, and another the Mild, and a third the Averter of Evil. And according to Pindar,

Quote

Apollo was by mighty Jove designed Of all the Gods to be to man most kind.

And Diogenes saith, that all things are the Gods', and friends have all things common, and good men are the Gods' friends; and therefore it is impossible either that a man beloved of the Gods should not be happy, or that a wise and a just man should not be beloved of the Gods. Can you think then that they that take away Providence need any other chastisement, or that they have not a sufficient one already, when they root out of themselves such vast satisfaction and joy as we that stand thus affected towards the Deity have? Metrodorus, Polyænus, and Aristobulus were the confidence and rejoicing of Epicurus; the better part of whom he all his lifetime either attended upon in their sicknesses or lamented at their deaths. So did Lycurgus, when he was saluted by the Delphic prophetess,

Dear friend to heavenly Jove and all the Gods.

And did Socrates when he believed that a certain Divinity was used out of kindness to discourse him, and Pindar when he heard Pan sing one of the sonnets he had composed, but a little rejoice, think you? Or Phormio, when he thought he had treated Castor and Pollux at his house? Or Sophocles, when he entertained Aesculapius, as both he himself believed, and others too, that thought the same with him by reason of the apparition that then happened? What opinion Hermogenes had of the Gods is well worth the recounting in his very own words. "For these Gods," saith he, "who know all things and can do all things, are so friendly and loving to me that, because they take care of me, I never escape them either by night or by day, wherever I go or whatever I am about. And because they know beforehand what issue every thing will have, they signify it to me by sending angels, voices, dreams, and presages."

23. Very amiable things must those be that come to us from the Gods; but when these very things come by the Gods too, this is what occasions vast satisfaction and unspeakable assurance, a sublimity of mind and a joy that, like a smiling brightness, doth as it were gild over our good things with a glory. But now those that are persuaded otherwise obstruct the very sweetest part of their prosperity, and leave themselves nothing to turn to in their adversity; but when they are in distress, look only to this one refuge and port, dissolution and insensibility; just as if in a storm or tempest at sea, some one should, to hearten the rest, stand up and say to them: Gentlemen, the ship hath never a pilot in it, nor will Castor and Pollux come themselves to assuage the violence of the beating waves or to lay the swift careers of the winds; yet I can assure you there is nothing at all to be dreaded in all this, for the vessel will be immediately swallowed up by the sea, or else will very quickly fall off and be dashed in pieces against the rocks. For this is Epicurus's way of discourse to persons under grievous distempers and excessive pains. Dost thou hope for any good from the Gods for thy piety? It is thy vanity; for the blessed and incorruptible Being is not constrained by either angers or kindnesses. Dost thou fancy something better after this life than what thou hast here? Thou dost but deceive thyself; for what is dissolved hath no sense, and that which hath no sense is nothing to us. Aye; but how comes it then, my good friend, that you bid me eat and be merry? Why, by Jove, because he that is in a great storm cannot be far off a shipwreck; and your extreme peril will soon land you upon Death's strand. Though yet a passenger at sea, when he is got off from a shattered ship, will still buoy himself up with some little hope that he may drive his body to some shore and get out by swimming; but now the poor soul, according to these men's philosophy,

Has no escape beyond the hoary main.

Yea, she presently evaporates, disperses, and perishes, even before the body itself; so that it seems her great and excessive rejoicing must be only for having learned this one sage and divine maxim, that all her misfortunes will at last determine in her own destruction, dissolution, and annihilation.

24. But (said he, looking upon me) I should be impertinent, should I say any thing upon this subject, when we have heard you but now discourse so fully against those that would persuade us that Epicurus's doctrine about the soul renders men more disposed and better pleased to die than Plato's doth. Zeuxippus therefore subjoined and said: And must our present debate be left then unfinished because of that? Or shall we be afraid to oppose that divine oracle to Epicurus? No, by no means, I said; and Empedocles tells us that

What's very good claims to be heard twice.



Therefore we must apply ourselves again to Theon; for I think he was present at our former discourse; and moreover, he is a young man, and needs not fear being charged by these young gentlemen with having a bad memory.

25. Then Theon, like one constrained, said: Well then, if you will needs have me to go on with the discourse, I will not do as you did, Aristodemus. For you were shy of repeating what this gentleman spoke, but I shall not scruple to make use of what you have said; for I think indeed you did very well divide mankind into three ranks; the first of wicked and very bad men, the second of the vulgar and common sort, and the third of good and wise men. The wicked and bad sort then, while they dread any kind of divine vengeance and punishment at all, and are by this deterred from doing mischief, and thereby enjoy the greater quiet, will live both in more pleasure and in less disturbance for it. And Epicurus is of opinion that the only proper means to keep men from doing ill is the fear of punishments. So that we should cram them with more and more superstition still, and raise up against them terrors, chasms, frights, and surmises, both from heaven and earth, if their being amazed with such things as these will make them become the more tame and gentle. For it is more for their benefit to be restrained from criminal actions by the fear of what comes after death, than to commit them and then to live in perpetual danger and fear.

26. As to the vulgar sort, besides their fear of what is in hell, the hope they have conceived of an eternity from the tales and fictions of the ancients, and their great desire of being, which is both the earliest and the strongest of all, exceed in pleasure and sweet content of mind that childish dread. And therefore, when they lose their children, wives or friends, they would rather have them be somewhere and still remain, though in misery, than that they should be quite destroyed, dissolved, and reduced to nothing. And they are pleased when they hear it said of a dying person, that he goes away or departs, and such other words as intimate death to be the soul's remove and not destruction. And they sometimes speak thus:

But I'll even there think on my dearest friend;

and thus:

Quote

What's your command to Hector? Let me know; Or to your dear old Priam shall I go?

And (there arising hereupon an erroneous deviation) they are the better pleased when they bury with their departed friends such arms, implements, or clothes as were most familiar to them in their lifetime; as Minos did the Cretan flutes with Glaucus,

Made of the shanks of a dead brindled fawn.

And if they do but imagine they either ask or desire any thing of them, they are glad when they give it them. Thus Periander burnt his queen's attire with her, because he thought she had asked for it and complained she was acold. Nor doth an Aeacus, an Ascalaphus, or an Acheron much disorder them whom they have often gratified with balls, shows, and music of every sort. But now all men shrink from that face of death which carries with it insensibility, oblivion, and extinction of knowledge, as being dismal, grim, and dark. And they are discomposed when they hear it said of any one, he is perished, or he is gone, or he is no more; and they show great uneasiness when they hear such words as these:

Quote

Go to the wood-clad earth he must, And there lie shrivelled into dust, And ne'er more laugh or drink, or hear The charming sounds of flute or lyre;

and these:

Quote

But from our lips the vital spirit fled Returns no more to wake the silent dead.

27. Wherefore they must needs cut the very throats of them that shall with Epicurus tell them, We men were born once for all, and we cannot be born twice, but our not being must last for ever. For this will bring them to slight their present good as little, or rather indeed as nothing at all compared with everlastingness, and therefore to let it pass unenjoyed and to become wholly negligent of virtue and action, as men disheartened and brought to a contempt of themselves, as being but as it were of one day's continuance and uncertain, and born for no considerable purpose. For insensibility, dissolution, and the conceit that what hath no sense is nothing to us, do not at all abate the fear of death, but rather help to confirm it; for this very thing is it that nature most dreads, —

But may you all return to mould and wet,

to wit, the dissolution of the soul into what is without knowledge or sense. Now, while Epicurus would have this to be a separation into atoms and void, he doth but further cut off all hope of immortality; to compass which (I can scarce refrain from saying) all men and women would be well contented to be worried by Cerberus, and to carry water into the tub full of holes, so they might but continue in being and not be exterminated. Though (as I said before) there are not very many that stand in fear of these things, they being but the tenets of old women and the fabulous stories of mothers and nurses, — and even they that do fear them yet believe that certain rites of initiation and purgation will relieve them, by which being cleansed they shall play and dance in hell for ever, in company with those that have the privilege of a bright light, clear air, and the use of speech, — still to be deprived of living disturbs all both young and old. For it seems that we

Impatient love the light that shines on earth,

as Euripides saith. Nor are we easy or without regret when we hear this:

Him s

Quote

peaking thus th' eternal brightness leaves, Where night the wearied steeds of day receives.

28. And therefore it is very plain that with the belief of immortality they take away the sweetest and greatest hopes the vulgar sort have. And what shall we then think they take away from the good and those that have led pious and just lives, who expect no ill after death, but on the contrary most glorious and divine things? For, in the first place, champions are not used to receive the garland before they have performed their exercises, but after they have contested and proved victorious; in like manner is it with those that are persuaded that good men have the prize of their conquests after this life is ended; it is marvellous to think to what a pitch of grandeur their virtue raises their spirits upon the contemplation of those hopes, among the which this is one, that they shall one day see those men that are now insolent by reason of their wealth and power, and that foolishly flout at their betters, undergo just punishment. In the next place, none of the lovers of truth and the contemplation of being have here their fill of them; they having but a watery and puddled reason to speculate with, as it were, through the fog and mist of the body; and yet they still look upwards like birds, as ready to take their flight to the spacious and bright region, and endeavor to make their souls expedite and light from things mortal, using philosophy as a study and preparation for death. Thus I account death a truly great and accomplished good thing; the soul being to live there a real life, which here lives not a waking life, but suffers things most resembling dreams. If then (as Epicurus saith) the remembrance of a dead friend be a thing every way complacent; we may easily from thence imagine how great a joy they deprive themselves of who think they do but embrace and pursue the phantoms and shades of their deceased familiars, that have in them neither knowledge nor sense, but who never expect to be with them again, or to see their dear father and dear mother and sweet wife, nor have any hopes of that familiarity and dear converse they have that think of the soul with Pythagoras, Plato, and Homer. Now what their sort of passion is like to was hinted at by Homer, when he threw into the midst of the soldiers, as they were engaged, the shade of Aeneas, as if he had been dead, and afterwards again presented his friends with him himself,

Coming alive and well, as brisk as ever,

at which, he saith,

They all were overjoyed.

And should not we then, — when reason shows us that a real converse with persons departed this life may be had, and that he that loves may both feel and be with the party that affects and loves him, — relinquish these men that cannot so much as cast off all those airy shades and outside barks for which they are all their time in lamentation and fresh afflictions?

29. Moreover, they that look upon death as the commencement of another and better life, if they enjoy good things, are the better pleased with them, as expecting much greater hereafter; but if they have not things here to their minds, they do not much grumble at it, but the hopes of those good and excellent things that are after death contain in them such ineffable pleasures and expectances, that they wipe off and wholly obliterate every defect and every offence from the mind, which, as on a road or rather indeed in a short deviation out of the road, bears whatever befalls it with great ease and moderation. But now, as to those to whom life ends in insensibility and dissolution, — since death brings to them no removal of evils, though it is afflicting in both conditions, yet is it more so to those that live prosperously than to such as undergo adversity. For it cuts the latter but from an uncertain hope of doing better hereafter; but it deprives the former of a certain good, to wit, their pleasurable living. And as those medicinal potions that are not grateful to the palate but yet necessary give sick men ease, but rake and hurt the well; just so, in my opinion, doth the philosophy of Epicurus, which promises to those that live miserably no happiness in death, and to those that do well an utter extinction and dissolution of the mind, while it quite obstructs the comfort and solace of the grave and wise and those that abound with good things, by throwing them down from a happy living into a deprivation of both life and being. From hence then it is manifest, that the contemplation of the loss of good things will afflict us in as great a measure as either the firm hope or present enjoyment of them delights us.

30. Yea, themselves tell us, that the contemplation of future dissolution leaves them one most assured and complacent good, to wit, freedom from anxious surmises of incessant and endless evils, and that Epicurus's doctrine effects this by stopping the fear of death by the belief in the soul's dissolution. If then deliverance from the expectation of infinite evils be a matter of greatest complacency, how comes it not to be afflictive to be bereft of eternal good things and to miss of the highest and most consummate felicity? For not to be can be good for neither condition, but is on the contrary both against nature and ungrateful to all that have a being. But those it eases of the evils of life through the evils of death have, it is very true, the want of sense to comfort them, while they, as it were, make their escape from life. But, on the other hand, they that change from good things to nothing seem to me to have the most dismaying end of all, it putting a period to their happiness. For Nature doth not fear insensibility as the entrance upon some new thing, but because it is the privation of our present good things. For to say that the destruction of all that we call ours toucheth us not is absurd, for it toucheth us already by the very apprehension. And insensibility afflicts not those that are not, but those that are, when they think what damage they shall sustain by it in the loss of their beings and in being suffered never to emerge from annihilation. Wherefore it is neither the dog Cerberus nor the river Cocytus that has made our fear of death boundless; but the threatened danger of not being, representing it as impossible for such as are once extinct to shift back again into being. For we cannot be born twice, and our not being must last for ever; as Epicurus speaks. For if our end be in not being, and that be infinite and unalterable, then hath privation of good found out an eternal evil, to wit, a never ending insensibleness. Herodotus was much wiser, when he said that God, having given men a taste of the sweets of life, seems to be envious in this regard, and especially to those that conceit themselves happy, to whom pleasure is but a bait for sorrow, they being but permitted to taste of what they must be deprived of. For what solace or fruition or exultation would not the perpetual injected thought of the soul's being dispersed into infinity, as into a certain huge and vast ocean, extinguish and quell in those that found their amiable good and beatitude in pleasure? But if it be true (as Epicurus thinks it is) that most men die in very acute pain, then is the fear of death in all respects inconsolable; it bringing us through evils unto a deprivation of good

31. And yet they are never wearied with their brawling and dunning of all persons to take the escape of evil for a good, and yet not to repute privation of good for an evil. But they still confess what we have asserted, that death hath in it nothing of either good hope or solace, but that all that is complacent and good is then wholly extinguished; at which time those men look for many amiable, great, and divine things, that conceive

the minds of men to be unperishable and immortal, or at least to go about in certain long revolutions of times, being one while upon earth and another while in heaven, until they are at last dissolved with the universe and then, together with the sun and moon, sublimed into an intellectual fire. So large a field and one of so great pleasures Epicurus wholly cuts off, when he destroys (as hath been said) the hopes and graces we should derive from the Gods, and by that extinguishes both in our speculative capacity the desire of knowledge, and in our active the love of glory, and confines and abases our nature to a poor narrow thing, and that not cleanly neither, to wit, the content the mind receives by the body, as if it were capable of no higher good than the escape of evil.