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CT

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PHILOSOPHY FOR THE ACTUAL SEPARATION OF MANKIND IN TWO WRESTLING CAMPS AND EPICURUS DIALECTIC VERSUS PYTHAGORAS DIALECTIC

Mankind is today separated into two wrestling camps ready to exterminate each other.

Is Philosophy responsible for this separation? Are particularly responsible both philosophical systems of the Samian Philosophers: Pythagoras and Epicurus, for the appearance of this terrible phenomenon? A parallelism of their dialectic can give the answer.

Considering according to Plato that Dialectic is the lifting up of the soul to the capacity of seeing the essence and destinies of both: the Universe and Man, of the Microcosmos and Macrocosmos, let us see, having as criterion that definition, the conception of life and of the world of both the above mentioned Samian Philosophers, it being understood that according to Plato and Aristotle the essence of philosophy and dialectic is the search and finding of the first principles and causes.

1. In accordance with Epicurus and his disciples, adherents and followers, philosophy is considered as «serving life» an activity in words and reasoning aiming at and realizing true full happiness; i.e. philosophy aims as utility and serviceability. Epicurus is not in the least therefore concerned with the lifting up of the soul to the seeing or theory of the First Principles and Causes; he is not a thinker engaged with the synoptical and comprehensive general view of the evolution of the world, species and man. The true full happiness bestowed to man by his learning and finding out the first principles and causes of things is scorned by Epicurus and his only pursuit is to find out the art which procures to practical life the right direction.

Contrarily it is the Pythagorean Philosophy which emphatically and more than any other one puts forward as basis and foundation, on which it builds, the supreme Commandment to Mankind all through the ages of the God of Light Apollo: «KNOW THYSELF». And, one knowing oneself does not of course know one's flesh, feet and hands, but one's soul, personality, individuality, one's mind by which one can discern intellectual things, perceive by one's spiritual eyes incorporeal spiritual beings and things. Therefore one, by knowing one's self,

knows the incorporeal, spiritual and intellectual God. For a man, by knowing himself (which is achieved as explained below by self-examination), is in a position to perceive and conceive God and by his reasoning capacities, by the inherent in every man «Logos» or the «word», can prove the existence of God.

He who knows God and conceives the order of things relies and has full confidence on Him and on His Divine Providence, he never experiences agony for whatever happens to him, but tranquillity, impassiveness and calmness.

Comparing in brief the philosophy of both Philosophers we see that the Epicurean one is terrestrial, onesided, partial, materialistic; on the contrary that of Pythagoras is gazing on the resplendent Light of the Intellectual Son and is aiming at the knowledge of the One God, the really and truly Being.

2. Pythagoras method is the «synoptical» (the including and comprehending all things terrestrial and heavenly, sensible and intellectual, corporeal and incorporeal) one, i.e. the clear of admixture DIALECTIC. On the contrary, Epicurus believes only in the inferential and inductive method, and is trying to find out laws and principles relying on the senses and on sensible things; he holds in contempt all other reasoning or method, and an analogy by which Aristotle discovered the famous four cases or principles: the material, the efficient, the specific and the final ones which are the causes, foundation and data for the existence and creation of any thing. On the other hand the canons or criterions of the Epicureans, which are indissolubly connected with the inductive and inferential research, are so vague and unsafe, that they can at the most safeguard to a certain measure the induction used in every day's life from committing tough errors and conclusions; but they cannot afford any guarantee and security concerning the true scientific study of Nature (Bahnsch).

3. Pythagoras, who lived three centuries before Epicurus, has proved himself and was considered as a divine man, whereas Epicurus on the contrary autoproclaims himself as being an atheist, by placing Gods in the void and consecrating them as not providing or caring either for man or the Universe and by considering them as subject to expulsion and disturbances even from their actual place in the void, when and if new worlds are in process of creation in those void spaces full of atoms, from which the new worlds are created and which atoms originate from other neighboring worlds in dissolution.

«The first Principle of all things and the last is God, in the knowledge of Whom and of His divine Laws man derives abundant life. He that hath not such knowledge, or who setteth his course counter thereto, is like a mariner without chart and log-book embarked upon a perilous sea. For of certainty no man can shake off the yoke of divine laws».

And elsewhere Pythagoras taught: «God is one indivisible and unchangeable, absolute perfection, the first and forming cause. And as perfection is God, perfection is the standard of things and should be the goal of men».

4. Epicurus thought the Soul as mortal, whereas Pythagoras proclaimed it as immortal and potentially as a spirit into which it can be transformed by the exercise of virtues¹. Thus Pythagoras taught: «Man is put on earth for the purpose of education, the cultivation of the divine element»². (Pythagoron⁴⁹). Further: «Man in this terrestrial existence is accorded the opportunity to attain eternal life as a superconscious Ego». Soul is raised to Spirit by the manifestation and practice of virtue and by raising of Soul to Spirit, man becomes a Son of God (Cnf. Romans 8: 14-19. Ephes. 2: 18-19, Philip; 2: 5-6, etc).

5. Further Pythagoras thought of Soul as confessor and judge. Thus, he said: «Subject thyself to rigid self-examination, probe thy heart».

«Twice each day examine thyself with sincerity and truth and in intellectual honesty give true judgement «by addressing to thyself in the morning and in the evening the three well known questions of the Pythagorean Golden Verses. And in conclusion, at the ill that you have done be troubled and rejoice for the good».

This Pythagoras' method, by which through self-knowledge the acquisition of knowledge of truth is attempted, contributes to the discovery of the true self-consciousness and self-knowledge; for Pythagoras was teaching that no man has mind or intellect until the moment he is awakened to the perception that he is endowed with it, which mind and intellect is, according to Pythagoras's dictum, «God's mirror and the satellite of Divinity.»

6. Epicurus was not worrying himself about the care and growth of soul and of the lifting up of man. On the contrary Pythagoras by the self-examination practice by day and by night, led man to the improvement, progress and growth of man's soul and was aiming at rendering him virtuous, saying: «If man will know himself, he will know the Universe and God (cnf. John 14: 7-11, 8: 19, 11; 19 etc) ². By the term «anataxis» he was defining the raising of the Soul from one level to another, teaching that the progress in question is possible during our terrestrial life and saying: «It is possible for the higher steps in anataxis, such as illumination, transfiguration, beatitude to be begun and completed in the terrestrial life». (Cnf. Ephes, 2:6).

On the other hand man is set free by self-knowledge from egoism, governs himself, he submits himself to self-discipline, which in accordance with Pythagoras is an indispensable supposition of Philosophy, as all this has been clearly shown and proved in the 900 schools of actual Greece, in which a new system of moral rearmament is applied, based on the Pythagorean principle in question.

For this reason Pythagoras rightly was teaching that the man who lives simply unconcerned of his improvement is like every insensible and dull creature, remaining in the so-called double ignorance of the Neo-Platonists.

1. Huson H.— Pythagoron, 1947.

2. Pythagoras' concept of Education was to enable man to Know God in order to better follow God (Jamblichos V.P. XVIII Taylor 63).

on the double sin of Saint-Dionysios the Areopagite, whereas the man who knows himself is in himself divine.

7. With regard to the theory of knowledge of both the above mentioned philosophical systems, it is to be noted that Epicurus is limiting it in the Canons of knowledge, having as criterion from theoretical point of view the sensorial conception, i.e. knowledge based on what the senses teach us, and from the practical point of view the feelings emotion and passions culminating in enjoyment (pleasure or delight) on the one side, and in pain of body or mind on the other side. «Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu» (Locke) is a dictum first proclaimed and preached by Epicurus, Intelligence namely and understanding is considered by Epicurus as more misleading and treacherous than sensation, for he asserts that intelligence depends on the senses.

The spiritual mind by which the soul conceives, perceives and knows itself is fully ignored by Epicurus. He attributes every error and going astray not to sensation and senses but to the incapacity of intelligence, to false reasoning. The senses, he proclaimed, are the sole criterion of truth. Epicurus even History was putting under purification.

On the contrary both Pythagoras and Heraclitus are proclaiming, together with the interminable army of the Greek Dialecticians, that the senses are misleading. The things which the senses consider as real are not at all indeed real, for all that which the senses conceive is eternally undergoing an uninterrupted change and alteration, all is in a continuous flux and flowing. Only the incorporeal and intelligible things are stable, stationary and unchangeable. Therefore only the latter are real and they can be apprehended and perceived by the mind through a mathematical discipline. And an unreal and non-existing thing cannot subsist in reality except by imagination. The presentations to consciousness of the external things by our senses are illusionary and misleading, for hardly we can perceive accurately by means of our senses. Only by means of our spiritual eye or mind we see and hear all things, all other perceptions are dull, blind and deaf. The senses are dull and do not perceive all things that surround us, but a few.

The Epicurians therefore are simply imagining all things, which they think that they perceive by their senses. Therefore they are in error both what regards sensorial perceptions and what regards their further reasoning based on such erroneous perceptions.

God, Divinity, Spirit, Mind, Soul of the World are the only real Being. All other things though corporeal and visible are unreal things, changing forms not for a single moment stable and durable but undergoing eternally an evolution and change. These precarious forms are condemned to dissolution and decay, whereas the really Being and the worlds and the spheres will never be destroyed. An eternal change and not death is the essence of the Universe, the Pythagoreans and later the Evangelists and Saint-Paul (Luke 20:38, Corinth. 15) proclaim.

8. According to Epicurus the final aim or «telos» which man should pursue in life is the choice and pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain and suffering, for suffering is caused when we cannot obtain that which we desire. Even the beautiful Epicurus related to the pleasure. He taught: I spit upon the beautiful and those who vainly admire it, when it does not produce pleasure, (Fr. Epic. 79) without respecting the beauty of Virtue.

9. The crucial point which separates the two worlds is that to avoid suffering or pain we have to overcome our passions, «to crucify our flesh» our lifting up our soul to the intelligible world, «resurrection from the dead», as Pythagoras first teaches and afterward Plato, and many others in the sequence, Christ above all. Whereas Epicurus imagines that death is the terminus, the ending point of human life and action, and this because as a limit of human action he thinks the period which is limited between human birth and death. This intermediate time-limit is what he thinks is human life. The teaching of the Pythagorean Philosophy puts as final aim the deification of man (comparing with and viewing narrowly what he sees) and consequently his beatitude by his final victory over his passions. The same teaching is taught by Plato, and Christ, as well as by Buddha and Democritus also, who declares that repentance from sin leads to salvation. Whereas Epicurus teaches that calmness, tranquillity of soul and quietness can be achieved without purification.

Pain besides and pleasure, according to Heraclitus, are the extreme ends of one and the same thing. And as long as the «mental pictures» or presentations to consciousness are formed by the senses, man is forming a mental picture (according to Epicurus) about pleasure congenital with every kind of pleasure, consequently of sexual pleasure. But if a student of Epicurean Philosophy orients himself towards such an end or «telos» how is it possible to realize in his soul the calmness, tranquillity and quietness, which such a philosophy promises? But on this question Epicurus responds by proclaiming celibacy for the philosopher, for marriage as he concedes, is very troublesome for an intellectual man (vide Luccretius, Description of Love). But in sooth: is celibacy recommendable and useful for family and social progress?

10. In his letter addressed to Menoeceus (Diogenes Laertius Book X, 126) Epicurus explains that death is not to be apprehended or dreaded, for by its coming, it puts an end to life, (according to that Philosopher as said above, immortality of soul does not exist) and he adds characteristically: «And just as with food he does not seek simply the larger share and nothing else, but rather the most pleasant, so he seeks to enjoy not the longest period of time, but the most pleasant». i.e.: Epicurus comparing both goods: the material one to that which is transcendental and worthy of every honor and appreciation he considers them equal in honor.

The above passage includes both about life views: the first, the Pythagorean one, as well as that of all ancient Greek Philosophers (using the word philosopher in its proper sense), admits life in flesh

as being identical to captivity of soul in the bondage of body much like to imprisonment; the second one, that of Epicurus, conceives that body can contribute to the realization of the final good: i.e. the calmness, tranquillity and quietness of soul.

11. In the same letter (l.c. 128) Epicurus says that «pleasure is the principle (–beginning) and end of living in beatitude. For this cause we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every thing. «This passage contains all the end, «to telos» which Epicurean thought is aiming at, and according to our judgement, it is worthy of our most careful attention for the appreciation of the whole Epicurean system of conception of the world and philosophy of life. On the contrary Pythagoras declares: «Happiness lies in virtue and education and not in adventitious advantages». Also: «Life in the spiritual world is happy, useful and interesting. (Pythagoron 30–31).

12. The preaching of Epicurus was: «live without being observed.» «I congratulate you, Apelles, in that you have approached philosophy free from all contamination», «I will not fail to mention the most eager after knowledge Epicurus, who, being profane and uninitiated in general education deeped and pronounced happy those, who like him, proceeded to philosophy, using such sentences as these: I congratulate you, Apelles. . . . etc.» (Athenaios, XIII p. 588a). Epicurus was teaching that the course of study leading to general education (curriculum) and mathematics were not contributing to any utility; he therefore recommended to Pythocles: »Blest youth, set sail in your bark and flee from every form of culture». (vide Sext. Empir. Epicurea Usener 227).

On the contrary Pythagoras honoring learning taught: «The real things may be seen with the Nous, through mathematical principles (enf. II Corinth. 4:18 and Romans 1:20). Also Pythagoras elsewhere said: «Virtue is induced through mathematical disciplines (mathesis) cognisable only by philosophy'.

The Philosophers in the Garden ignored the starting point to real wisdom, not recognising the existence of anything else except matter, nor that of a supreme Power providing for its children and far remote was from them the thought of recognizing moments of repentance and of turning their mind from sensible and carnal things to spiritual and intellectual, in their life.

14. The Epicureans abolishing Gods caring for Mankind and depriving them from their privileges to punish those who violate Divine Order and Law, are at the same time by so doing abolishing the most adequate means of the youth education, it being understood that «fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom» and that «in man resides the power of deification through

cleansing from guilt or defilment or through purification». On the contrary Pythagoras in the Golden Verses, as the first condition of true, full happiness and as the first article of Creed and as first virtue commands: «Honor Gods», it being understood that without repentance, i.e. turning of the mind from sensible things and carnal pleasures to the respect of Divine Law and Commandments or purification no true education, morality or dialectic can exist.

15. As long as the Epicureans consider atoms and matter, as only principles by necessity they ignore the essence of Soul, of Nous and of the Good, which together with matter constitute the famous »tetraktys» of the Pythagoreans, the basis, foundation and «root» of the Universe and of Man. In such an ignorance and darkness being plunged the Epicureans could not have «the art of life», for a life passed in pleasure, if it does not lift up itself from matter cannot bestow true full happiness. The Epicureans by putting forward matter body and senses as criterions of truth, they refuse to soul spiritual substance and the possibility of deification and immortality.

On the contrary Pythagoras deemed the soul as being the principal component of man, by saying: «Man is not a body, which is only a possession of the Soul (enf. Romans 8:9 ff). When man knows himself as a soul and not as a body, he knows he is impervious to death or hurt, and nothing transitory can matter much. The soul never had a beginning and can have no end. It is immortal and eternal. (Pythagoron 28–29).

16. The material pleasure Epicurus not only did not despise, but being, as mentioned, bachelor and living with Leontion, teaching that: «the beginning and the root of all good is the pleasure of the stomach (Fr. Epic. 59), was far away to be deemed a philosopher in the sense of philosophy as understood either by Pythagoras or Plato, for in the noteworthy following passage the latter defines philosophy as preparation for death: «Those who are truly exercising philosophy are eluding the attention of the common herd that they are not doing any other thing in life than to overcome their material passions and to crucify flesh». Indeed by purification, restraint and self-control one spiritualizes oneself. And as long as he advances on the way of purification, so more the fence, separating the visible world from the invisible becomes thinner, and at last the much wished for moment arrives, when the much doubted Invisible World becomes Visible to his inner senses and the true Philosopher is united with the Soul of the World and with the First and Supreme Cause of Man and Universe. the Good of Plato, «the Father in Heaven», of Christ. And as it is well known such an experience is already described by Heraclitus, Plato (in his Republic), Plotinus, Porphyrius, Proclus, Saint Paul and Saint-Denys, not to forget Dante in his Divine Commedia (Paradise).

But the first who unveils the same truth is Pythagoras and in the Pythagorean Golden Verses we first meet the scale of virtues, as afterwards explained in detail by Plato and the Neo-Platonists. Pythagoras

is the first who divided and separated the natural, moral and political virtues from the supreme and divine ones: the purifying, theoretical (which render the Philosopher «epoptis» and by that word those were meant, who were admitted to the highest grade of the Eleusinian Mysteries), the paradigmatical, and last of all the theurgical Virtues. If one does not master this scale of Virtues one is far away from understanding Greek and Universal Philosophy. And Epicurus had not the least idea of the existence and significance of the scale in question.

This is the reason for which the greatest spiritual conqueror of Occident, Aristotle, composed his famous poem to Virgin Virtue.

From what preceeds Pythagoras is shown to be the most synoptical and dialectical Man of Ancient Greece : his whole Philosophy deals exhaustively with Virtue, which consists in living consonant with Natural Justice and automatically rewarded by operation of compensation.

That Virgin Virtue, which with Ancient Greece had the same meaning and was identified with the essence of Soul, Pythagoras put forward as the final aim, possession, prey and spoil of life, being fully convinced and by his own experience knowing its tremendous uplifting power and its overwhelming importance for Ancient Greece and Mankind: this scale of Virtues is the only sure road which, by exercising us to do what is needful towards our fellow men with the natural, moral and political Virtues, predisposes and prepares us to do what is needful towards our Soul and towards God or the Supreme and First Cause. This is the Line of Direction followed by all true and genuine Philosophers in Ancient Greece, from Mousaios, Linus, Orpheus, Hesiod, Homer and Pythagoras till Plotinus and the last Neo-Platonists Porphyrius, Syrianos, Proclus, Olympiodoros and Damascius.¹

The only one who deviated from that line is Epicurus: he is the Fatal Man, who has sown in Modern Europe, by means of Lucretius, and that at the beginning of Renaissance, the baleful seed of separation of Mankind into the two antagonistical Camps, ready to fight and exterminate one another.

1. The ideals of Pythagorean Philosophy so closely approach those of Christianity, that the earliest fathers of the Christian Church of them notably Justin, were moved to declare that Pythagoras Socrates, Plato and one or two of the others, were «Christian before Christ (Augustine, Civ. Dei, VIII, 6; On hearing Gospels 1, 12 Athenagoras, Headden VI, Clemens Alex. Strom. I, V Justin, Apol 2d, X etc. Gov. of God 11; etc).