

Epicurus' Κυρία Δόξα XVII

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IN 1888 Usener published a collection of sayings Karl Wotke had discovered in the Vatican with the title 'Ἐπικούρου Προσφώνησις—the 'Pronouncement of Epicurus'. In all, this new gnomologium contained some 81 pronouncements, twelve of which had been long familiar from Diogenes Laertius. The rest, except those which were already known as the pronouncements of Metrodorus, were new; or new in their Greek original.¹

The new Vatican collection irritated sores surrounding the question of the genesis and authenticity of the *Κύρια Δόξαι* which Usener had opened a year before.² But some of the new sayings were in fact the pronouncements of Epicurus, and they allowed a better appreciation of the care Epicurus took in refining the language of his moral teaching to its sharpest point. One of the new sayings (*Sententia Vaticana* 68) Usener spotted as the reformulation of one of Epicurus' *gnomai* known in its earlier form from Aelian and Stobaeus.³ The saying they knew as:

ὧ ὀλίγον οὐχ ἱκανόν, ἀλλὰ τούτῳ γε οὐδὲν ἱκανόν

was apparently not neat enough for Epicurus. If Usener is right, he reduced his thought to the curt and elegant

οὐδὲν ἱκανόν ὧ ὀλίγον τὸ ἱκανόν

—"nothing is enough for the man for whom little is enough." Another of the new sayings from the Vatican made it clear that Epicurus not only went to pains to reformulate his own language, but that of others. Usener recognized that one of the new sayings, which had survived until Wotke's discovery only in the translation of Seneca (SV 9;

¹ WS 10 (1888) 175–201.

² In the preface to his *Epicurea* (Leipzig 1887) xliii–li.

³ 473 Us.; cf. Usener (*supra* n.1) 181. The shorter version of the saying is also preserved with five other sayings attributed to Epicurus in *Cod. Palat. gr.* 129 and is published by Usener in WS 12 (1890) 2.

Ep. 12.10), was in fact Epicurus' ingenious adaptation of the comic lines attributed to Sousarion:⁴

κακὸν γυναῖκες· ἀλλ' ὅμως, ὦ δημόται,
οὐκ ἔστιν οἰκεῖν οἰκίαν ἄνευ κακοῦ.

On this improbable model Epicurus fashioned his teaching on *ananke*:

κακὸν ἀνάγκη, ἀλλ' οὐδεμία ἀνάγκη ζῆν μετὰ ἀνάγκης.

This is not only a reformulation or parody, but a reformation of earlier wisdom. As Usener conjectured, Epicurus' maxim is not only formed on the model of *κακὸν γυναῖκες*, but it tacitly corrects its model on the point of the necessity of resignation to the evil of marriage.

Epicurus seems then to have realized that one way to make his moral teaching memorable was to alter slightly the *memores motus*⁵ established in the minds of his readers. By fashioning his own doctrine on the template of older precepts, he corrects his predecessors by reformulating their doctrines. The most striking case of such a reformation comes from the *Κύρια Δόξαι*. Usener noticed that *ΚΔ* xvi had its origin in Democritus:⁶

ἄνθρωποι τύχης εἶδωλον ἐπλάσαντο πρόφασιν ἰδίης ἀβουλίας.
βιαὶ γὰρ φρονήσει τύχη μάχεται, τὰ δὲ πλείιστα ἐν βίῳ εὐξύνετος
ὄξυδερκείη κατιθύνει.

What Usener did not see is that Epicurus' language is clearly a response to Democritus and, in its changes, a correction:

βραχέα σοφῶ τύχη παρεμπίπτει, τὰ δὲ μέγιστα καὶ κυριώτατα ὁ
λογισμὸς διώκηκε καὶ κατὰ τὸν συνεχῆ χρόνον τοῦ βίου διοικεῖ
καὶ διοικῆσει.

There are few changes, but Democritus hardly remains the same. The main refinements are *βραχέα* for *βιαία*; *τὰ πλείιστα* is corrected by and restricted to *τὰ μέγιστα καὶ κυριώτατα*. *Κατιθύνει* is replaced by *διοικεῖ* and *εὐξύνετος ὄξυδερκείη* by *λογισμὸς*. And Democritus' strong expression *μάχεται* is changed to *παρεμπίπτει*. All these changes appear

⁴ Kock, *CAF* I p.3; cf. Usener (*supra* n.1) 180.

⁵ For the conception of memory suggested in Lucretius 3.1040 cf. *Epicuro* (ed. G. Arrighetti) [31]20.6–14.

⁶ Diels-Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*¹⁰, v 119. *ὄξυδερκείη* is Diel's emendation of the MSS *ὄξυδερκεῖν*.

to be deliberate revisions designed to bring out in more humble language the essential truth Epicurus discovered in Democritus; and they compel attention to what Epicurus seems to have objected to in Democritus' way of stating the relation between chance or fortune and calculation. For Democritus the sharp eye of the helmsman was a guide through dangerous waters. For Epicurus, who placed his highest good in a harbor sheltered from wind and wave, the scope of a man's concern and calculation contracts to his own household⁷ and those of his affairs that are of greatest importance to him and his peace of mind. Fortune is not at war with the power of reason; it breaks in on him. Epicurus' word for this is *παρεμπίπτει*, which can describe any sudden incursion into a man's city, house or affairs.⁸

Even more interesting is the language of the saying which follows (xvii). Looking in the direction indicated by Usener, Peter von der Mühl believed that he had discovered the original of this saying too in Democritus.⁹ Surprisingly, perhaps, it predates Democritus and goes back to the early VI century B.C. Under Epicurus' terse formula

ὁ δίκαιος ἀταρακτότατος, ὁ δ' ἄδικος πλείστης ταραχῆς γέμων

can be seen the language of Solon:¹⁰

ἐξ ἀνέμων δὲ θάλασσα ταρασσεται· ἦν δέ τις αὐτὴν
μὴ κινῆ, πάντων ἐστὶν δικαιοσύνη.

Epicurus' use of this couplet might seem strange at first for a man in whose school history was mute and the name of Solon never heard; especially for a man whose political thought is at times reduced to *Λάθε βιώσας* and *Μὴ πολιτεύεσθαι*. Yet Epicurus contradicts the best known of Solon's ethical precepts in one of the Vatican sayings (*εἰς τὰ*

⁷ So I take *διοικέω*. Comparable is *Epicuro* [71] and the sense of *κατὰ τὴν περὶ τῶν κυριωτάτων οἰκονομίαν* in *Ep. ad Hdt.* 79.8 and *Epicuro* [23]50.7–12. In SV 41 Epicurus combines philosophy and attention to one's household.

⁸ The verb *παρεμπίπτω* occurs at the end of the *Letter to Herodotus* (82.2) to describe those sudden and repeated events which terrify the ignorant; it is used twice in the *Περὶ φύσεως* to describe the incursion of new thoughts and *simulacra*, *Epicuro* [31]32.17, where the notion which breaks in on one's consciousness is said to "flow out" again, and [32]10.6. Significantly, in Philodemus' *Rhetoric* (ed. S. Sudhaus) I 267.7, it is associated with *ταραχή*. Alciphron (ed. A. Meineke) gives the closest parallel to the sense of the word in Epicurus: "*Ἐρω με οὐκ ἐφ' παρεμπεσῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ λογισμοῦ κυβερνᾶσθαι*."

⁹ Diels-Kranz, *Vorsokr.* B 215; "Epikurs *Κύρια Δόξα* und Demokrit," *Festgabe Adolf Kaegi* (Frauenfeld 1919) 117.

¹⁰ Plut. *Vita Sol.* 3 (=fr.11 Diehl³).

παρωχηκότα ἀγαθὰ ἀχάριστος φωνῆ ἢ λέγουσα· τέλος ὄρα μακροῦ βίου)¹¹ and takes Solon's poetry as his model for ΚΔ xvii, where Epicurus' language preserves that of Solon (δικαιοσύνη) and combines two of the main terms in which Solon had expressed his conception of justice: these are δίκη and παράσσω.

These lines from one of Solon's elegies owe their preservation to the oddness of calling the sea the "justest" of all things. Plutarch was struck by the metaphor and reproduces these lines to illustrate the archaic character of Solon's 'physiology' (ἐν δὲ τοῖς φυσικοῖς ἀπλοῦς ἐστι λίαν καὶ ἀρχαῖος). Since Plutarch cites this distich along with fr.10 (Diehl³) (ἐκ νεφέλης πέλεται χίονος μένος ἠδὲ χαλάζης) it is clear that the association between the events of nature and those of the polis struck him as archaic and not the physical doctrine that the sea is stirred up rather than calmed by the winds. But in this interpretation Plutarch understood the true character of Solon's thought and saw in the metaphors uniting nature and the city the old-fashioned way of speaking of the two as if they were one.¹² Edmonds, who could not conceive the sea as the "justest" of all things, did not, and severed the connection between nature and the polis by forming an adjective never seen before or again in Greek—ἀκαισύνη, "the quietest of all things." One sure indication of the archaic character of Solon's thought ἐν τοῖς φυσικοῖς is that the term δίκη is never reproduced in the frequent application of these gnomic lines later in antiquity. Herodotus,

¹¹ SV 75, for which the perfect commentary is Epicurus' letter to Idomeneus, *Epicuro* [45]. This saying proves Usener right in his objection to the language of *De Finibus* 2.21.67: *in vestris disputationibus historia muta est. numquam audivi in Epicuri schola Solonem nominari*; the proper word is not *nominari*, but *laudari* (*Epicurea*, p.329). Metrodorus did in fact mention Solon and legislators like him with contempt, *Metrodori Epicurei Fragmenta* (ed. A. Körte) fr.32. Usener took SV 75 as an attack against the Peripatetics, *WS* 11 (1889) 170, but the passages he cites in Aristotle (*Eth.Eud.* 1219b6 and *Eth.Nic.* 1110a10) neither use the language Epicurus responds to nor could give him ground for attack. Epicurus seems to be the first to know the saying of Solon in this form; cf. the testimony collected in A. Martina's *Solon* (Rome 1968) no.202. Given the ancient reluctance to associate the names of Solon and Epicurus, it is hardly surprising that the name of Epicurus is nowhere mentioned in A. Masaracchia's *Solone* (Florence 1958).

¹² W. Jaeger calls attention to the association of nature and the polis in Solon, *Paideia*, transl. G. Highet, I (Oxford 1939) 142 n.1, as had N. Bachius, *Solonis Athenienensis carminum quae supersunt* (Bonn 1825) 96, when he printed frs. 10 and 11 (Diehl³) as one poem. This association is set out with more care and in more detail by Gregory Vlastos in his "Solonian Justice," *CP* 41 (1946) 65–83, and especially 65, 68–69. For the association in Anaximander and Alcmaeon, see Vlastos in *CP* 42 (1947) 156–78, especially 157–58, 168–73. Masaracchia, *op.cit.* (*supra* n.11) 301, is therefore hopelessly far from the truth when he speaks of a "sovrapposizione di immagini e di termini."

Polybius, Livy and Cicero all evoke the calm of the sea as a paradigm for things political, especially for the naturally placid disposition of the *demos*.

None of these ancient references to the two lines from Solon combines *ἀταραξία* with *δίκη*, and Edmonds' strange emendation is worth recalling only as a modern example of the failure to appreciate the metaphoric and archaic character of Solon's thought. Yet what both ancients and moderns have failed to see, or have ignored, Epicurus saw quite clearly: *δίκη* and *ἀταραξία* are connected. Yet in Epicurus' *KΔ xvii* Solon's metaphor seems to be reversed. If a man is just he is like the sea when calm. The epithet *ἀτάρακτος* can describe the sea in Greek;¹³ if it evokes the sea in *KΔ xvii*, it is because it has its model in Solon and because of the importance of the calm and radiant sea in Epicurus' moral thought. It is said that he did not use ornament or metaphor in his writings (*κέχρηται λέξει κυρία*, Diog.Laert. 10.13), but Epicurus, as were Solon and Democritus¹⁴ before him, was fascinated by the prospect of the sea when calm; or perhaps it is more accurate to say, as Nietzsche does, when it has become calm.¹⁵ For Solon this calm was a natural state; for Epicurus it is not natural in the sense that it is inborn or the ordinary and right state of things if left to themselves. The justice and *ἀταραξία* of the soul is rather a state for which we naturally strive. As he treats the problem of freedom in his *Περὶ φύσεως*, Epicurus speaks of *τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆ[ς τ]αραχώ[δη] φύσιν* (*Epicuro* [31]21.10–20), and he must be echoed in his conception of the early turbulence of the soul by Lucretius, who speaks of *illa naturae cuiusque animi vestigia prima* (3.308–09).

Solon's conception of things is quite different, and it is significant that the verb *παράσσω* occurs again in our fragments of Solon's poetry to help express his conception of justice and *Eunomia*. Just as the violent disturbances of the natural world are provoked by the concentration of one element at the expense of the others, any improper distribution brings imbalance and turmoil. If someone other

¹³ As in the Aristotelian *Problemata* 994b28.

¹⁴ Cf. fr. A 1 (Diels-Kranz, *Vorsokr.* II 84.21) where the adverbs *γαληνῶς* and *εὐσταθῶς* describe the calm of the soul; cf. *Vorsokr.* II 129.16 and, in another but analogous context, fr. A 152.

¹⁵ "Solch ein Glück hat nur ein fortwährend Leidender erfinden können, das Glück eines Auges, vor dem das Meer des Daseins stille geworden ist," *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* 44 (*Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. K. Schlechta, II [Munich 1966] 68).

than Solon had taken control of Athens, he would not have restrained the *demos* and would not have been satisfied until he had churned up the state and scooped off the thick cream for himself:¹⁶

οὐκ ἂν κάτεσχε δῆμον οὐδ' ἐπαύσατο
πρὶν ἀνταράξας πῖαρ ἐξεῖλεν γάλα.

Forms of both *δίκη* and *ταράσσω* figure in Epicurus' characterization of the just man. They have their origin in Solon's conception of justice and the natural equipoise of the just state of things. But in Epicurus the larger context of the *polis* is completely absent; characteristically Epicurus speaks only of the individual—*ὁ δίκαιος*, and appears to have banished the word *δίκη* with all of its earlier associations from his vocabulary. In his surviving writings *πατρίς* does not occur, and *πόλις* appears only once as a metaphor in SV 31. *Ataraxia* has become in Epicurus an ethical norm which centers not in the *polis* but in the human heart. Yet the calm of the sea, which Solon had called the "justest" of all things, remains for Epicurus an ethical norm—not for the city but for the individual.

Epicurus had other terms to describe the calm of the just man. Possibly the remotest from the metaphor of the sea and its *ἀταραξία* is the "lack of suspension of the nature (of the soul)" (*Epicuro* [31] 17.5). But even in an abstract expression such as this the prospect of the sea at calm might have some influence over Epicurus' thought and expression.¹⁷ His *Letter to Herodotus* opens with the statement that he had discovered the greatest calm in his constant occupation with the study of nature (*τοιούτῳ μάλιστα ἐγγαληνίζον τῷ βίῳ*, 37.3), and concludes with the assurance that the rapid review of the most important principles of his physiology will secure for his followers the calm of philosophy (*γαληνισμός*, 83.13). Plutarch reproduces this metaphor when he reports that Epicurus placed the highest good in the deepest calm—as within a harbor sheltered from winds and waves (*ὥσπερ ἐν ἀκλύτῳ λιμένι καὶ κωφῷ*, 544 Us.). In answer to the descrip-

¹⁶ Fr.25.6–7 (Diehl³); cf. fr.23 (Plut. *Vita Sol.* 15.1), where the participles *συγγέας* and *ταράξας* occur together. Vlastos, *CP* 41 (1946) 69 and n.37, properly connects the sense of *κυκώμενον* of fr.1.61 with the verb *ταράσσω* in fr.11.

¹⁷ Epicurus' phrase is *τὸ μὴ αἰωρούμενον τῆς φύσεως*; cf. 434 Us. and *Pap.Herc.* 1251 (ed. W. Schmid, *Ethica Epicurea* [Leipzig 1939]) col. 6.8. The verb is also used by Diogenes of Oenoanda to describe the currents of air aloft in which the sun is tossed, fr.8 (ed. C. W. Chilton) col.4.3.

tion of old age as a refuge for all ills, Epicurus placed the peace and security of old age in a like harbor.¹⁸

This calm and freedom from turmoil (*γαλήνη* and *ἀταραξία*) is the dominant metaphor in Epicurus' moral thought. The pair of terms *ἀταραξία* and *ταραχή* has its connection with the language of Greek medicine, and possibly Epicurus' appreciation of its rightness for the agitation of morbid states is reflected in Lucretius' description of a fit of epilepsy: *ut in aequore salso | ventorum validis fervescunt viribus undae*.¹⁹ In Greek, the health of the body and peace of mind can be described by the word *ataraxia*. The man who is at peace (*ἀτάραχος*), fearing no harm from others and offering none himself, is *ἑαυτῷ καὶ ἑτέρῳ ἀόχλητος* (SV 79; cf. *KΔ* 1 and *Ep. ad Men.* 127.10).

By the very fact of calling attention to Solon's conception of justice, Epicurus silently stresses how different his own conception is from that of Solon. The terms *δίκη* and *ἀταραξία* do not bridge the gap. Epicurus' thought has freed itself from the *polis*, any larger organization of society than *κοινωνία*, and from any vestige of a conception of *δίκη*. When he speaks of the agreements on which societies rest, Epicurus is careful to state that such agreements are possible at any time and in any place whatsoever (*καθ' ὀνηλίκοις δήποτε αἰεὶ τόπους*, *KΔ* xxxiii). Justice is regarded, like injustice and pleasure, only in terms of its effect on the individual. And injustice does not harm society as it had in the thought of Solon, but the individual. Justice is accompanied by calm and pleasure (cf. *KΔ* v); injustice by the greatest turmoil, anxiety, and fear of detection and punishment. This is the Epicurean argument of the *De Finibus* and a natural development of *KΔ* xvii: justice makes the soul calm, injustice makes it turbulent.²⁰

¹⁸ SV 17; cf. Antiphanes, fr.255 (ed. Kock, CAF), who compares old age to an altar as a "refuge" for all kinds of evil. Bion's version of this same conceit (Diog.Laert. 4.48) can be read as a sardonic comment on SV 17 (*καθώρμικεν*); cf. Usener's comments (*supra* n.1) 184.

¹⁹ 3.493–94. In his commentary to Book III of Lucretius (Leipzig 1897) 126, Heinze compares Galen, *Comm. in Hippocr. aph.* vol.17 v 544. Recently Charles Segal has drawn attention to a closer parallel to the language of Lucretius in the Hippocratic *Περὶ φυσῶν*, CP 65 (1970) 180–82. In the treatise on breaths a fit of epilepsy is described as a storm and the return of health *γαλήνη*: *κατασάντος τοῦ αἵματος καὶ γαλήνης ἐν τῷ σώματι γενομένης πέπαιται τὸ νόσημα* (p.252, ed. Jones). This use of the verb *καθίστημι* to describe the quieting down of unsettled conditions might help to explain what Epicurus calls *ἡδονὴ καταστηματικὴ*; cf. G. Vlastos, CP 41 (1946) 69 n.36, and the sense of *Ep. ad Men.* 128.1–10.

²⁰ R. Philippson in his "Die Rechtsphilosophie der Epikureer," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 23 (1910) 302, fails to understand the thought compressed into *KΔ* xxxiv: "Auf keinen Fall kann er besagen, dass man das Unrecht nur aus Furcht vor Strafe meiden

This precisely is what Epicurus meant when he said that by itself (*καθ' ἑαυτήν*) injustice is not an evil (*ΚΔ xxxiv*); it is only an evil in that it makes the soul turbulent—*ταραχῆς γέμων*.

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solle." This is hardly Epicurus' point, and what he says is plain: injustice is not an evil of and in itself, but in the uneasiness and turmoil it creates in the soul of the man who dreads detection and punishment. Unaccountably, Philippson appeals to *ΚΔ xvii* in his discussion of *ΚΔ xxxiv* (p.321) without seeing the light it throws on his troublesome saying. For more light, see Torquatus' remarks in *De Fin.* 1.16.50; Democritus, Diels-Kranz, *Vorsokr.* B 215; and Epicurus frs. 531, 532 Us.