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A chapter of Epicurean philosophy in Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella*¹

When the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry (ca. 234 - ca. 304/310 AD) was around 68 years old, he married Marcella, who was a widow and mother of seven children. It seems that he married her, mainly because she already used to practise some sort of philosophical activity. When he was away on a divinely sanctioned journey, Porphyry sent her a letter with exhortations, so that she could continue dealing with true philosophy and thus live an unperturbed and happy life. Interestingly enough, this letter is not fully representative of Neoplatonism as a philosophical system. Since its discovery in a codex of the Ambrosian Library in Milan in the early 19th century, Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella* (Πορφυρίου φιλοσόφου Πρὸς Μαρκέλλαν) has been edited and/or translated at least 15 times.²

Scholarship on this letter in the decades following the discovery of the text focused on its relationship to the Greek philosophical tradition, and in particular to that form of the tradition embodied in the *sententiae* ascribed to Pythagorean and Epicurean philosophers. Usener, the first editor of Epicurean texts, fragments and testimonies, accepted that in paragraphs 27-31 of this letter Porphyry collated 18 scattered Epicurean statements,³ which deal with the law of Nature. In this, Usener was more or less followed by other editors of Epicurean fragments as well, like Arrighetti⁴ and Zografidis,⁵ and by editors of Porphyry's letter. By far, none of these Epicurean views has been attributed to any known work,⁶ with the exception of a certain fragment (27.425-427),⁷ which is a variant of Epicurus' *Principal doctrine*

¹ This is a preliminary version of the paper, which was presented in Greek at the 9th Panhellenic Symposium of Epicurean Philosophy (February 9-10, 2019, Cultural Center of Pallini, Athens), following a suggestion and invitation by Christos Yapijakis. A full version of this paper will appear in the forthcoming Proceedings of the Symposium.

² The only known extant manuscript of this work of Porphyry has been dated to about 1500. The most recent edition and English translation is in *Porphyry the Philosopher, To Marcella*, by Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, Index Verborum by Lee E. Klosinski, Texts and Translations 28, Graeco-Roman Religion Series 10, Scholar's Press, Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, Georgia, 1987.

³ Herman Usener, *Epicurea*, In aedibus B.G. Teubneri, Lipsiae 1887 (repr. Teubner, Stuttgart 1966). In the *Letter to Marcella* Usener distinguishes 18 different Epicurean views (*Principal doctrine* XV and frs. Nos 200, 202*, 203, 207*, 221, 445, 457, 471, 476, 478, 479, 480, 481, 485, 486, 489, 530). See also his Preface, pp. LVIII-LXI.

⁴ Graziano Arrighetti, *Epicuro. Opere*, Nuova edizione riveduta e ampliata, Giulio Einaudi Editore, Biblioteca di Cultura Filosofica 41, Turin 1973. The Epicurean fragments Arrighetti identifies in the *Letter to Marcella* are Nos 126, 180, 198, 209, 210, 213, 214, 216, 218, 225, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 247, 248.

⁵ Επίκουρος, *Ηθική. Η θεραπεία της ψυχής*, Εισαγωγή – μετάφραση – σχόλια Γιώργος Ζωγραφίδης, Εκδόσεις Ζήτρος, Θεσσαλονίκη 2009. The Epicurean fragments Zografidis identifies in the *Letter to Marcella* are Nos 95, 124, 125, 168, 208, 217, 221, 225, 227, 228, 229, 240, 255, 256, 257, 261, 270.

⁶ For example, for Usener some of these fragments are "Incertarum Epistularum Fragmenta" and the majority are "Incertae Sedis Fragmenta Opiniorumque Testimonia".

⁷ "Ὁ τῆς φύσεως πλοῦτος ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφος ὄρισται καὶ ἔστιν εὐπόριστος, ὁ δὲ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν ἀόριστός τε καὶ δυσπόριστος".

XV⁸ / *Vatican saying VIII*.⁹ In Porphyry a similar formulation is first found in his *On abstinence from killing animals*,¹⁰ which was written probably earlier than the *Letter to Marcella*. The same view is also partly quoted in Plutarch's *How the young man should study poetry*.¹¹

A new careful reading of Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella*, however, most probably shows that what Porphyry actually did in paragraphs 27-31 (See Appendix), was to include only one isolated fragment and to incorporate an integral Epicurean text, without ascription to its author, but with slight modifications. Since the *Letter to Marcella* must have been composed around 300 AD, i.e. approximately 570 years after Epicurus' death, it cannot be estimated with certainty to which Epicurean philosophers the integral text Porphyry incorporated belongs. In his work *On abstinence from killing animals*, also in the form of letter, Porphyry says that he knows of writings ("συγγράμματα") by Epicurus himself and other Epicureans, the majority of which were full of narrations as to how little Nature requires ("τὸ ὀλιγοδεὲς τῆς φύσεως ἀφηγούμενοι"), and that its necessities may be sufficiently remedied by slender and easily procured food.¹² Porphyry was right in that he was aware of a number of treatises on this subject, exactly because the Epicurean schools were known for the encouragement of innovative approaches to correct interpretation of Epicurus' original doctrine.¹³ In the same work Porphyry continued by quoting a long Epicurean text (1.49-55), which seems to be an analysis of a variant of *Principal doctrine XV / Vatican saying VIII*, based on the approval of a simple, trouble-free diet. The coherent integral text in the *Letter to Marcella*, not known as such until today, contains a different analysis of a variant of the same view (27.425-427), which is exactly about how the wealth of Nature is well-defined and easily obtained. Porphyry's familiarity with Epicurean philosophy and writings could probably be explained, if one bears in mind that he was of Syrian origin. Of the same origin were

⁸ Epicurus, *Κύρια δόξαι XV*: "Ὁ τῆς φύσεως πλοῦτος καὶ ὄρισται καὶ εὐπόριστός ἐστιν· ὁ δὲ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκπίπτει".

⁹ Epicurus, *Προσφώνησις VIII*: "Ὁ τῆς φύσεως πλοῦτος καὶ ὄρισται καὶ εὐπόριστός ἐστιν· ὁ δὲ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν εἰς ἄπειρον ἐκπίπτει καὶ ἔστι δυσπόριστος".

¹⁰ Porphyry, *Περὶ ἀποχῆς ἐμψύχων I.49*: "ὄρισται γάρ, φησὶν, ὁ τῆς φύσεως πλοῦτος καὶ ἔστιν εὐπόριστος, ὁ δὲ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν ἀόριστός τε ἦν καὶ δυσπόριστος". The view is presented here as belonging to Epicurus himself.

¹¹ Plutarch, *Πῶς δεῖ τὸν νέον ποιημάτων ἀκούειν 37a*: "ὁ τῆς φύσεως πλοῦτος ὄρισται". For G. Roskam ("Plutarch as a source for Epicurean philosophy: Another aspect of his *Nachleben*", *Ploutarchos*, n.s., vol. 4, 2006/2007, pp. 80-81) in the long quotation near the end of the *How the young man should study poetry*, at first sight, Epicurus' views receive by Plutarch a positive evaluation. They are introduced as examples of the philosophical insights to which poetry can prepare young men. In fact, however, it is the radicalness and strangeness of the Epicurean views which makes them so interesting for Plutarch in this context. For Plutarch is looking for philosophical tenets which are at odds with widespread convictions, and what he needs here are "strange" doctrines of other philosophical schools. By quoting Epicurus, Plutarch indirectly makes clear how strange the latter's philosophy is. If that is true, the passage should not be understood as an approval of Epicurus' views, but as subtle polemic.

¹² Porphyry, *Περὶ ἀποχῆς ἐμψύχων I.48*: "τῶν γὰρ Ἐπικουρείων οἱ πλείους ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ κορυφαίου ἀρξάμενοι μάζη καὶ τοῖς ἀκροδρῦοις ἀρκοῦμενοι φαίνονται, τὰ τε συγγράμματα ἐμπεπλήκασιν τὸ ὀλιγοδεὲς τῆς φύσεως ἀφηγούμενοι καὶ τὸ ἐκ τῶν λιτῶν καὶ εὐπορίστων ἰκανῶς αὐτῆς τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἰώμενον παριστάντες".

¹³ Cf. Tiziano Dorandi, "Organization and structure of the philosophical schools", in K. Algra, J. Barnes, J. Mansfeld and M. Schofield (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, pp. 56-57.

some well-known Epicureans, like Philodemus, Philonedes, Basilides and Zeno of Sidon.¹⁴

First of all, Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella* could well be a treatise in epistolary form, which introduces the recipient as to how one can lead a philosophical life, but it could also be argued that this is a philosophical letter. It is known that the practice of writing philosophical letters goes back to the oldest generations of Pythagoreans, and even to Pythagoras himself, while Epicurus was the first to communicate a significant part of his philosophy in the form of letters, and this is the genre of protreptic epistolography.¹⁵ Since the *Letter to Marcella* contains Pythagorean and Epicurean doctrines, Porphyry might have imitated or followed Pythagoras and Epicurus in this practice. With regard to philosophy, the letter form was considered appropriate for the dissemination of ideas beyond the inner circle around the philosopher as illustrated by Epicurus' *Letter to Menoeceus*, which contains an exposition of moral theory intended for the general public. As has been argued, the *Letter to Marcella* was actually intended for public circulation and can be interpreted as a protreptic text written in order to convert its readers to true philosophy.¹⁶ Other studies on Porphyry have shown that he used to cite the works of other authors ranging over a millennium from Homer to his own contemporaries. His style of thinking was called "paratactic". In other words, since Porphyry was no single-minded professional philosophical thinker, he often placed a number of different interpretations, explanations etc. in his own works and left the reader to make his own choice. The way Porphyry incorporated citations by other authors deserves of course further examination as a genre of its own. Probably the one unifying theme throughout Porphyry's work is his passionate devotion to Greek culture in the broadest sense, with philosophy as the leading component.¹⁷ In his edition of Plotinus' *Enneads*, Porphyry confesses that he modified his master's texts by inventing titles and dividing long treatises into shorter units. For each unit Porphyry used to make a brief hint as to its topic. By doing this, he wanted to make the material easily readable.¹⁸

More importantly, what is suggested here is that in the *Letter to Marcella* (27.425-31.483) Porphyry did not make a collation of a number of scattered views deriving from different Epicurean texts, but inserted an integral text, which was either a single chapter or even a whole treatise of Epicurean philosophy, aiming at the elaboration of a specific view of Epicurus, i.e. a variant of *Principal doctrine XV / Vatican saying VIII*. The chapter or treatise was structured on a sequence of arguments and ideas, which seem to follow one another, and Porphyry must have generally been in agreement with its content. Thus, he must have inserted it in his own

¹⁴ Cf. Wilhelm Crönert, "Die Epikureer in Syrien", *Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Institutes in Wien*, vol. 10, 1907, pp. 145-152.

¹⁵ John Dillon, "The Letters of Iamblichus: Popular Philosophy in a Neoplatonic Mode", in Eugene Afonasin, John Dillon and John F. Finamore (eds.), *Iamblichus and the foundations of later Platonism*, Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval texts and contexts, vol. 13, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2012, pp. 51-62.

¹⁶ Helène Whittaker, "The purpose of Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella*", *Symbolae Osloenses*, vol. 26, 2001, pp. 150-168.

¹⁷ Andrew Smith, "Porphyry – Scope for a reassessment", in George Karamanolis and Anne Sheppard (eds.), *Studies on Porphyry*, Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, BICS, Supplement 98, 2007, pp. 12-13. See also, *Porphyry: On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, Translated by Gillian Clark, Ancient Commentators on Aristotle, General editor: Richard Sorabji, Bloomsbury, London – N. Delhi – N. York – Sydney, 2nd ed. 2014, pp. 19-20.

¹⁸ Πορφυρίου *Περὶ τοῦ Πλωτίνου βίου καὶ τῆς τάξεως τῶν βιβλίων αὐτοῦ*, Εἰσαγωγή, ἀρχαῖο κείμενο, μετάφραση, σχόλια Πάυλος Καλλιγιάς, Ἀκαδημία Ἀθηνῶν, Βιβλιοθήκη Α. Μανούση, Κέντρον Ἐκδόσεως Ἐργῶν Ἑλλήνων Συγγραφέων, Δεύτερη ἐκδοσι, Ἀθήναι 1998, pp. 180, 184.

work with minor interventions. Porphyry introduces the whole topic to his reader by saying that in what follows he will discuss the law of Nature. The view that “the written laws are laid down for the sake of temperate men” seems to belong to Epicurus (fr. 530 Usener), but not to the extant text which follows about the law of Nature from line 27.425 onwards. The title of the original chapter or treatise could very well have been the actual formulation of this particular Epicurean doctrine: “Ὁ τῆς φύσεως πλοῦτος ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφος ὄρισταί καὶ ἔστιν εὐπόριστος, ὁ δὲ τῶν κενῶν δοξῶν ἀόριστός τε καὶ δυσπόριστος”. The Epicurean text is interrupted for a while from 28.439 to 28.443, because Porphyry felt the need to insert a Neoplatonic view of his own about abstinence from food and sex. It does not seem to be a coincidence, however, that, as seen already, in his work *On abstinence from killing animals*, Porphyry also inserted an Epicurean text about the wealth of Nature. Immediately afterwards, in the *Letter to Marcella* he cited the continuation of the Epicurean text by presenting three exhortations deriving from “the philosophers” (“οἱ φιλόσοφοι”), who are not further specified. Porphyry introduced these views of the Epicureans by means of the verbs “φασίν”, “λαμβάνονται” and “παρακελεύονται”, probably because of his partial agreement with them.¹⁹ Till the end of paragraph 31 (line 483) Porphyry reproduced the remaining Epicurean text with no intervention of his own.²⁰ After the end of this text, Porphyry, in the form of a very brief summary, stated that the discussion about the law of Nature is over. Porphyry’s vague reference to the existence of prescriptions similar to those described in the previous paragraphs (“τὰ τούτοις ὅμοια”) might be in connection with his claim in his work *On abstinence from killing animals* that he knew of many other Epicurean treatises with similar content.

The argumentation, which supports the ethical exhortations in paragraphs 27-31 of the *Letter to Marcella*, is structured on inter-connected sets of opposing views:

On the one hand, there are positive concepts like the wealth of Nature, which is limited, well-defined and easily obtained, and thus, he who follows Nature is self-sufficient. Also, the perception of what is not necessary, the absence of fear, the blessed reason, the wisdom, the knowledge and the confidence deriving from the simple way of life allow people to become in control of themselves. Finally, the love of true philosophy purges the passion of the soul, and therefore its benefit is compared with the benefit from medicine.

On the other hand, there are negative concepts like the empty false opinions, the ill-defined and hard to obtain wealth, the unlimited yearnings, the ignorant people, those who have a fever because of the serious nature of their disease, the desire of what is most detrimental, the fickle desires, the greed, the fear which reproduces its own self, the soul, the fear and the unlimited and empty desire as causes of great evils, the feeling to be always in need of everything as a consequence of forgetting Nature, the unlimited, disturbing and painful desire, the fleeting fancy, the turmoil deriving from excessive riches and the bestial life which has the same cause. Similarly, it is underlined that as the flesh cries not to be hungry, not to be thirsty and not to be cold, similarly the soul does not repress these cries.

¹⁹ Cf. Porphyrios, *Πρὸς Μαρκέλλαν*, ed. Walter Pötscher, Griechischer Text herausgegeben, übersetzt, eingeleitet und erklärt, Brill, Leiden 1969, p. 98.

²⁰ An indication of the coherence of the Epicurean text in the section 30.465-476 of the *Letter to Marcella* is presented by Kathleen O’Brien Wicker who argues (*op. cit.*, p. 118): “This section resembles in some aspects a mini-diatribе on τύχη vs φύσις and is Stoic in its perspective as well as Epicurean”. It is characteristic that for Usener this section contains two different Epicurean fragments (frs. 200 and 489).

Further research is, of course, necessary concerning Porphyry's surviving works for a better understanding of his style of thinking and writing, especially when his works serve as vehicles for views belonging to other philosophical schools and the Epicureans in particular. So far, he seems to have been the only Neoplatonist who inserted basic tenets of Epicureanism in his own philosophical treatises. With reference to the Epicurean chapter in the *Letter to Marcella*, Porphyry himself did not name its author, though it is somehow clear that it is an analysis of a main view of Epicurus and belonged to his rich collection of Epicurean writings with a similar content. The Epicurean view survives in four variants and Porphyry reproduced two different treatises about its meaning in his works *On abstinence from killing animals* and *Letter to Marcella*.

APPENDIX

In what follows, the Greek text of lines 27.420-31.484 of Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella* is accompanied by the English translation also by Kathleen O'Brien Wicker (*op. cit.*, pp. 68-73).

In the Greek text most quotation marks, by means of which O'Brien Wicker (cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 114-119) denotes the collation of various Epicurean fragments in accordance to Usener's edition of them, have not been adopted. In line 27.431 <οὐ> is added following A. Nauck's edition of Porphyry's text (*Porphyrii philosophi platonici Opuscula tria*, Lipsiae, In aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1860) and also in accordance with the meaning of the sentences before and after. In line 28.447 "διό" is corrected to "διὸ". Quotation marks are inserted for the text of lines 28.447-28.450, which Usener and other editors of Epicurean fragments have not recognized as Epicurean views.

In the translation, the supposed title of the incorporated Epicurean chapter or treatise is denoted by means of underlined text. Again, most quotation marks, by means of which O'Brien Wicker denotes the collation of various Epicurean fragments in accordance to Usener's edition of them, have not been adopted. The translation of line 27.431 is modified with the addition of <not>. Quotation marks are inserted for the translation text of lines 28.447-28.450.

420 27. κατανοητέον οὖν πρῶτόν
 421 σοι τὸν τῆς φύσεως νόμον, ἀπὸ δὲ τούτου ἀναβατέον ἐπὶ
 422 τὸν θεῖον, ὅς καὶ τὸν τῆς φύσεως διέταξε νόμον. ἀφ’
 423 ὧν ὠρμημένη οὐδαμοῦ εὐλαβήσῃ τὸν ἔγγραφον. “οἱ γὰρ
 424 ἔγγραφοι νόμοι χάριν τῶν μετρίων κεῖνται, οὐχ ὅπως μὴ
 425 ἀδικῶσιν, ἀλλ’ ὅπως μὴ ἀδικῶνται.” “ὁ τῆς φύσεως πλοῦτος
 426 ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφος ὄρισταί καὶ ἔστιν εὐπόριστος, ὁ δὲ τῶν
 427 κενῶν δοξῶν ἀόριστός τε καὶ δυσπόριστος. ὁ οὖν τῆ
 428 φύσει κατακολουθῶν καὶ μὴ ταῖς κεναῖς δόξαις ἐν πᾶσιν
 429 αὐτάρκης. πρὸς γὰρ τὸ τῆ φύσει ἀρκοῦν πᾶσα κτήσις ἔστι
 430 πλοῦτος, πρὸς δὲ τὰς ἀορίστους ὀρέξεις καὶ ὁ μέγιστος
 431 πλοῦτός ἐστιν οὐδέν. <οὐ> σπάνιον γε εὐρεῖν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς
 432 τὸ τῆς φύσεως τέλος πένητα καὶ πλούσιον πρὸς τὰς κενὰς
 433 δόξας. οὐδεὶς γὰρ τῶν ἀφρόνων οἷς ἔχει ἀρκεῖται,
 434 μᾶλλον δὲ οἷς οὐκ ἔχει ὀδυνᾶται. ὥσπερ οὖν οἱ πυρές-
 435 σοντες διὰ κακοήθειαν τῆς νόσου ἀεὶ διψῶσι καὶ τῶν
 436 ἐναντιωτάτων ἐπιθυμοῦσιν, οὕτω καὶ οἱ τὴν ψυχὴν κακῶς
 437 ἔχοντες διφκημένην πένονται πάντων ἀεὶ καὶ εἰς
 438 πολυτρόπους ἐπιθυμίας ὑπὸ λαιμαργίας ἐμπίπτουσιν.”
 439 28. ἀγνεύειν οὖν καὶ οἱ θεοὶ δι’ ἀποχῆς βρωμάτων καὶ
 440 ἀφροδισίων προσέταξαν, εἰς τὸ τῆς φύσεως, ἦν αὐτοὶ
 441 συνέστησαν, ἐπάγοντες βούλημα τοὺς εὐσέβειαν μετιόν-
 442 τας, ὡσὰν παντὸς τοῦ παρὰ τὸ βούλημα πλεονάζοντος
 443 μισροῦ καὶ θανασίμου. “φοβούμενος γὰρ ὁ πολὺς τὸ λιτὸν
 444 τῆς διαίτης, διὰ τὸν φόβον ἐπὶ πράξεις πορεύεται τὰς
 445 μάλιστ’ ἂν τοῦτον παρασκευαζούσας. καὶ πολλοὶ τοῦ πλούτου
 446 τυχόντες οὐ τὴν ἀπαλλαγὴν τῶν κακῶν εὖρον, ἀλλὰ μετα-
 447 βολὴν μειζόνων.” διὸ φασὶν οἱ φιλόσοφοι “οὐδὲν οὕτως
 448 ἀναγκαῖον ὡς τὸ γινώσκειν καλῶς τὸ μὴ ἀναγκαῖον,
 449 πλουσιωτάτην δὲ εἶναι πάντων τὴν αὐτάρκειαν καὶ
 450 σεμνὸν τὸ μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι” λαμβάνονται. διὸ καὶ
 451 “μελετᾶν” παρακελεύονται “οὐχ ὅπως τι ποριστέον ἀναγκαῖον,
 452 ἀλλ’ ὅπως μᾶλλον θαρρήσομεν μὴ πορισθέντος. 29. μηδὲ
 453 αἰτιώμεθα τὴν σάρκα ὡς τῶν μεγάλων κακῶν αἰτίαν μηδ’
 454 εἰς τὰ πράγματα τρέπωμεν τὰς δυσφορίας, ἐν δὲ τῆ ψυχῇ
 455 τὰς τούτων αἰτίας μᾶλλον ζητῶμεν καὶ ἀπορρήξαντες πᾶσαν
 456 ματαίαν τῶν ἐφημέρων ὄρεξιν καὶ ἐλπίδα ὅλοι γενώμεθα
 457 ἑαυτῶν. ἢ γὰρ διὰ φόβον τις κακοδαίμονεϊ ἢ δι’ ἀόρισ-
 458 τον καὶ κενὴν ἐπιθυμίαν. ἅ τις χαλινῶν δύναται τὸν
 459 μακάριον ἑαυτῷ περιποιῆσαι λογισμόν. ἐφ’ ὅσον δ’ ἂν
 460 ἀμηχανῆς, λήθη τῆς φύσεως ἀμηχανεῖς· σαυτῷ γὰρ ἀορίσ-
 461 τους φόβους καὶ ἐπιθυμίας προσβάλλεις· κρεῖσσον δὲ σοὶ
 462 θαρρεῖν ἐπὶ στιβάδος κατακειμένη ἢ ταραττεσθαι χρυσοῦν
 463 ἐχούση κλίνην καὶ πολυτελεῖ τράπεζαν. ἐξ ἐργασίας
 464 θηριώδους οὐσίας μὲν πλῆθος σωρεύεται, βίος δὲ
 465 ταλαίπωρος συνίσταται. 30. ἀφυσιολόγητον μηδὲν ἡγοῦ
 466 βοώσης τῆς σαρκὸς βοᾶν τὴν ψυχὴν· σαρκὸς δὲ φωνὴ μὴ
 467 πεινῆν, μὴ διψῆν, μὴ ῥιγοῦν. καὶ ταῦτα τὴν ψυχὴν
 468 χαλεπὸν μὲν κωλύσαι, ἐπισφαλές δὲ παρακοῦσαι τῆς παραγ-

469 γειλάσης φύσεως αὐτῇ διὰ τῆς προσφυοῦς αὐτῇ ἀνταρκειίας
470 καθ' ἡμέραν. καὶ τὰ παρὰ τῆς τύχης μικρότερα διδάσκει
471 νομίζειν, καὶ εὐτυχοῦντας μὲν γινώσκειν ἀτυχεῖν, δυσ-
472 τυχοῦντας δὲ μὴ παρὰ μέγα τίθεσθαι τὸ εὐτυχεῖν· καὶ
473 δέχεσθαι μὲν ἀθορύβως τὰ παρὰ τῆς τύχης ἀγαθὰ, παρατε-
474 τάχθαι δὲ πρὸς τὰ παρ' αὐτῆς δοκοῦντα εἶναι κακά. ὡς
475 ἐφήμερον μὲν πᾶν τὸ τῶν πολλῶν ἀγαθόν ἐστι, σοφία δὲ
476 καὶ ἐπιστήμη οὐδαμῶς τύχης κοινωνεῖ. 31. οὐκ ἀπορεῖν τού-
477 των πόνος ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ φέρειν μᾶλλον τὸν ἀνόνητον ἐκ τῶν
478 κενοδοξῶν πόνον. ἔρωτι γὰρ φιλοσοφίας ἀληθινῆς πᾶσα
479 ταραχώδης καὶ ἐπίπρονος ἐπιθυμία ἐκλύεται. κενὸς ἐκεί-
480 νου φιλοσόφου λόγος, ὅφ' οὐ μὴδὲν πάθος ἀνθρώπου θερα-
481 πεύεται· ὥσπερ γὰρ ἰατρικῆς οὐδὲν ὄφελος, εἰ μὴ τὰς
482 νόσους τῶν σωμάτων θεραπεύει, οὕτως οὐδὲ φιλοσοφίας,
483 εἰ μὴ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐκβάλλει πάθος." ταῦτα μὲν οὖν καὶ
484 τὰ τούτοις ὅμοια ὁ τῆς φύσεως παραγγέλλει νόμος.

TRANSLATION

27. So then, first you must grasp the law of Nature and from it ascend to the divine law which also established the law of Nature. With these laws as your point of reference, you need never be concerned about the written law. “For the written laws are laid down for the sake of temperate men, not to keep them from doing wrong but from being wronged.” “The wealth of Nature, being truly philosophic, is well-defined and easily obtained, but the wealth of empty false opinions is ill-defined and hard to obtain. So then, the person who follows Nature and not empty false opinions is self-sufficient in everything. For satisfying Nature any possession is wealth, but for satisfying unlimited yearnings even the greatest wealth is nothing. It is <not> rare to find a man poor in the attainment of Nature but rich in empty false opinions. For no ignorant man is satisfied with what he has; instead he pines for what he does not have. So then, just as those who have a fever are always thirsty because of the serious nature of their disease and eagerly desire what is most detrimental, so also those who have the soul which manages it in distress are always in need of everything and fall prey to fickle desires under the influence of their excessive greed.” 28. Consequently, even the gods have prescribed remaining pure by abstinence from food and sex. This leads those who are pursuing piety toward Nature’s intent, which the gods themselves constituted, as though any excess, by being contrary to Nature’s intent, is defiled and deadly. “For the ordinary man who fears the simple way of life is driven by fear into actions which are most likely to produce it. And many who have become wealthy have not found relief from evils but rather an exchange for greater ones.” Therefore, the philosophers say that “nothing is as necessary as perceiving clearly what is not necessary,” and that “the greatest wealth of all is self-sufficiency,” and they take “the need of nothing as worthy of respect.” Therefore they exhort us to “practice not how we must provide for some necessity but how we will remain confident when it is not provided. 29. Let us neither censure the flesh as cause of great evils nor attribute our distress to external circumstances. Rather let us seek their causes in the soul, and, by breaking away from every vain yearning and hope for fleeting fancies, let us become totally in control of ourselves. For it is either through fear that a person becomes unhappy or through unlimited and empty desire. By bridling these feelings a person can gain possession of blessed reason for himself. To the extent that you are troubled, it is because you forget Nature, for you inflict upon yourself unlimited fears and desires. But it is better for you to have confidence as you lie on a bed of straw than to be in turmoil while you possess a gold couch and a costly table. As a result of lamentable labor, property is amassed but life becomes bestial. 30. Consider it in no way contrary to Nature for the soul to cry out when the flesh cries out. The flesh cries not to be hungry, not to be thirsty, not to be cold. And so it is difficult for the soul to repress these cries, but it is dangerous for it to disregard nature’s exhortations to it because of the self-sufficiency which grows in it from day to day. Nature also teaches us to regard the outcomes of fortune of little account and to know how to be unfortunate when we are favored by fortune, but not to consider the favors of fortune important when we experience misfortune. And Nature teaches us to accept unperturbed the good outcomes of fortune, but to stand prepared in the face of the seeming evils which come from it. For all that the masses regard as good is a fleeting fancy, but wisdom and knowledge have nothing in common with fortune. 31. Pain does not consist in lacking the goods of the masses but rather in enduring the unprofitable suffering that comes from empty false opinions. For the love of true philosophy causes every disturbing and painful desire to subside. Empty is the

discourse of that philosopher by which no human passion is healed. For just as there is no benefit from medicine if it does not heal the bodies' diseases, neither is there from philosophy if it does not purge the passion of the soul." So then, the law of Nature prescribes these things and others like them.

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