

# The Ethics of Epicurus and its Relation to Contemporary Doctrines by Jean-Marie Guyau. Edited by Testa and Ansell-Pearson, translated by Testa

Post by “Pacatus” of May 8, 2023 at 1:33 PM

## [Quote from Pacatus](#)

I like what the translator says about Guyau taking an evolutionary view of any philosophical system – while recognizing the importance of trying to identify the associated germinal ideas at the foundation. I would add: a dialectical-evolutionary approach, taking into account multiple perspectives (a kind of dialectical perspectivism).

I wanted to add to my comment about Guyau’s evolutionary approach ...

Here’s what I mean by “dialectical perspectivism”\* (which is not the simple thesis-antithesis-synthesis):

There is no “view from nowhere – or from everywhere” (the so-called “God’s-eye view”): there are only multiple perspectives. A metaphor –

First you look through this window into the room; then another window, etc. Maybe you get in through an open door. Even if you get to stand in the center of the room, your view as you turn around changes. No one of those views is the sole “right one.” But false perspectives (e.g. manipulated with mirrors, in this visual metaphor) are possible.

My perspectivism is more that of the Spanish existential philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset than of Nietzsche – but the idea is that the best we can really do is to allow ourselves as many perspectives as possible, sort through them, form the best picture for ourselves (which will itself be a personal, existential perspective), and be willing to change our “view” as new views come to fore for us.

In terms of Epicurus and the evolution of Epicureanism, I think we need to approach it the same way, as we each personalize our application. And always read critically, every source. I might find a given viewpoint or quote personally helpful: but that doesn’t mean it is some definitive summation – just a helpful perspective. (I don’t know yet how Guyau presents his evolutionary analysis; have to keep reading ... ☐☐)

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\* The method is how I recall one writer describing Marx’s dialectical approach in Capital: analyzing from such conceptual viewpoints as use-value, labour-value, exchange-value and

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value.