

Studies on Epicurus' Influence on Marx

Post by "Cassius" of May 15, 2020 at 5:28 PM

Joshua speaking only for myself I know that I too consider myself out of my depth in dealing with Marx because I haven't studied him nearly well enough to know where to attack the problem.

But I do know this: I can't read that excerpt without sensing something very "off" -or at least, very different from - Epicurean analysis.

A sentence like *"It is the fantastic realization of the human essence since the human essence has not acquired any true reality"* seems totally disconnected from the kind of clear and direct analysis which is characteristic of Epicurus. What is "human essence"? What is "true reality"?

"The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo."

There seems to be a lot of "poetry" going on here which doesn't seem calculated to enlighten, but to grip the emotions - maybe the word is mesmerize, and I can't help but think about Lucretius' descriptions of Heraclitus' appeal to people who are overly impressed by word play.

I am very open to finding helpful applications of Epicurean philosophy wherever I can find them, but I have never been able to find anything particularly helpful, at least for me, in Marx's analysis. They Utilitarians (as discussed recently in other threads) definitely yes, but not in Marxism.

In fact, though I am surely no fan of conventional religion, that passage almost makes me think that conventional religion might be in some respects more "sane" than Marx himself. I am not sure I can imagine Marx making the kind of remark that Epicurus made in the letter to Menoeceus about it being better to believe the myths of religion than the views of hard determinism.