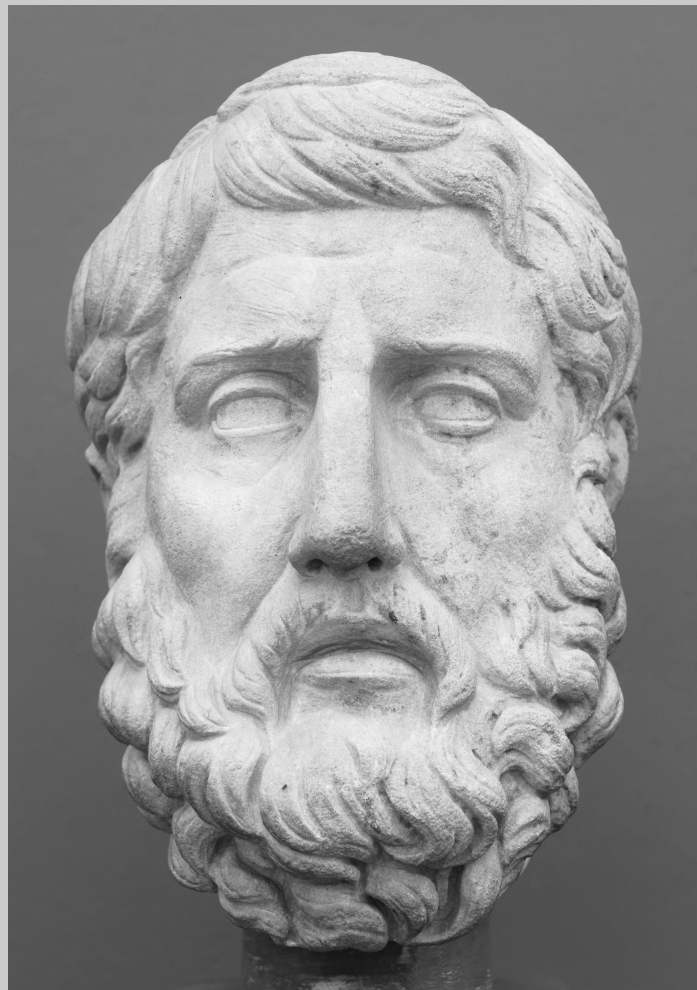

**The Life and Works of
HERMARCHUS OF MYTILENE**



Testimonia and Fragments

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LIFE

DIOGENES LAERTIUS, X, 24-25 [16]

And his [sc. Epicurus'] successor was Hermarchus, of Mytilene, the son of Agemortus (a poor man), whose favourite pursuit was rhetoric. And the following excellent works of his are extant: twenty-two books of *letters about Empedocles*; an essay on *Mathematics*; a treatise against *Plato*; another against *Aristotle*.

AMBROSE, Epist. LXIII, 19 [11]

He [sc. Epicurus] declares, as Demarchus [sc. Hermarchus - likely error in transmission] asserts, that neither drinking, nor banquets, nor offspring, nor embraces of women, nor abundance of fish, and other such like things which are prepared for the service of a sumptuous banquet, make life sweet, but sober discussion.

DIOGENES LAERTIUS, X, 13 [16]

He [sc. Epicurus] also agreed with Hermarchus in not admitting that Leucippus deserved to be called a philosopher; though some authors, among whom is Apollodorus, speak of him as the master of Democritus.

DIOGENES LAERTIUS, X, 16-21 (Epicurus' will) [16]

"According to this, my will, I give all my possessions to Amynomachus, of Bate, the son of Philocrates, and to Timocrates, of Potamos, the son of Demetrius; [...] on condition that they make over my garden and all that is attached to it to Hermarchus, of Mytilene, the son of Agemortus; and to those who study philosophy with him, and to whomsoever Hermarchus leaves as his successors in his school, that they may abide and dwell in it, in the study and practice of philosophy [...] As for the house in Melite, that Amynomachus and Timocrates shall allow Hermarchus that he may live in it during his life, together with all his companions in philosophy.

Out of the income which is derived from that property, which is here bequeathed by me to Amynomachus and Timocrates, I will that they, consulting with Hermarchus, shall arrange in the best manner possible the offerings to the names in honour of the memory of my father, and mother, and brothers, and myself, and that my birthday may be kept as it has been in the habit of being kept, on the tenth day of the month Gamelion; and that the reunion of all the philosophers of our school, established in honour of Metrodorus and myself, may take place on the twentieth day of every month. They shall also celebrate, as I have been in the habit of doing myself, the day consecrated to my brothers, in the month Poseideon; and the day consecrated to memory of Polyaenus, in the month Metageitnion.

Amynomachus and Timocrates shall be the guardians of Epicurus, the son of Metrodorus, and of the son of Polyaenus, as long as they study philosophy under, and live with Hermarchus. In the same way also, they shall be the guardians of the daughter of Metrodorus, and when she is of marriageable age, they shall give her to whomsoever Hermarchus shall select of his companions in philosophy, provided she is well behaved and obedient to Hermarchus. And Amynomachus and Timocrates shall, out of my income, give them such a sum for their support as shall appear sufficient year by year, after due consultation with Hermarchus. And they shall associate Hermarchus with themselves in the management of my revenues, in order that everything may be done with the approval of that man who has grown old with me in the study of philosophy, and who is now left as the president of all those who have studied philosophy with us. And as for the dowry for the girl when she is come to marriageable age, let Amynomachus and Timocrates arrange that, taking for the purpose such a sum from my property as shall seem to them, in conjunction with Hermarchus, to be reasonable. [...]

I further enjoin them to give all my books to Hermarchus; and, if anything should happen to Hermarchus before the children of Metrodorus are grown up, then I desire that Amynomachus and Timocrates, shall take care that, provided they are well behaved, they shall have every-

thing that is necessary for them, as far as the estate which I leave behind me shall allow such things to be furnished to them.

CICERO, De fin. II, 30 [15]

“Epicurus to Hermarchus greeting. I write this letter, [...] while passing a happy day, which is also the last day of my life. And the pains of my bladder and bowels are so intense that nothing can be added to them which can make them greater.” [...] “But still I have to balance this a joy in my mind, which I derive from the recollection of my philosophical principles and discoveries. But do you, as becomes the goodwill which from your youth upwards you have constantly discovered for me and for philosophy, protect the children of Metrodorus.”

DIOGENES LAERTIUS, X, 15 [16]

Hermarchus, the son of Agemarchus, and a citizen of Mytilene, succeeded him [sc. Epicurus] in his school. He died of the stone, as Hermarchus mentions in his letters, after having been ill a fortnight [...]

Sent. Vat. XXXVI [12]

Epicurus’ life when compared to other men’s in respect of gentleness and self-sufficiency might be thought a mere legend.

PHILODEMUS, On Death, col. XXVII [17]

But that (it) was more glorious in respect of reputation, as both for these men and for Leonteus and Metrodorus, who were looked after by each other and (who) all looked after Epicurus, and for Hermarchus who actually buried him and protected his remains, and man of good sense would agree.

DIOGENES LAERTIUS, X, 25 [16]

And he [sc. Hermarchus] died of paralysis, being a most eminent man.

DIOGENES LAERTIUS, X, 25 [16]

[...] And among the most eminent philosophers of the school of Epicurus, were Polystratus, who succeeded Hermarchus, and Dionysius who succeeded him, and Basileides who succeeded him.

WORKS

AGAINST EMPEDOCLES (as preserved by Porphyry)

PORPHYRY, De abstin., I, 3 [2]

For you are perhaps ignorant, that not a few philosophers are adverse to abstinence from animal food, but that this is the case with those of the Peripatetic and Stoic sects, and with most of the Epicureans; the last of whom [sc. Hermarchus] have written in opposition to the philosophy of Pythagoras and Empedocles [...]

PORPHYRY, De abstin., I, 7-12 [2]

The Arguments of the Epicureans, from Hermachus¹

7. The Epicureans, however, narrating, as it were, a long genealogy, say, that the ancient legislators, looking to the association of life, and the mutual actions of men, proclaimed that manslaughter was unholy, and punished it with no casual disgrace. Perhaps, indeed, a certain natural alliance which exists in men towards each other, though the similitude of form and soul, is the reason why they do not so readily destroy an animal of this kind, as some of the other animals which are conceded to our use. Nevertheless, the greatest cause why manslaughter was considered as a thing grievous to be borne, and impious, was the opinion that it did not contribute to the whole nature and condition of human life. For, from a principle of this kind, those who are capable of perceiving the advantage arising from this decree, require no other cause of being restrained from a deed so dire. But those who are not able to have a sufficient perception of this, being terrified by the magnitude of the punishment, will abstain from readily destroying each other. For those,

¹This philosopher was a Mitylenaeon, and is said to have been an auditor of, and also the successor of, Epicurus.

indeed, who survey the utility of the before-mentioned ordinance, will promptly observe it; but those who are not able to perceive the benefit with which it is attended, will obey the mandate, in consequence of fearing the threatenings of the laws; which threatenings certain persons ordained for the sake of those who could not, by a reasoning process, infer the beneficial tendency of the decree, at the same time that most would admit this to be evident.

8. For none of those legal institutes which were established from the first, whether written or unwritten, and which still remain, and are adapted to be transmitted, [from one generation to another] became lawful through violence, but through the consent of those that used them. For those who introduced things of this kind to the multitude, excelled in wisdom, and not in strength of body, and the power which subjugates the rabble. Hence, through this, some were led to a rational consideration of utility, of which they had only an irrational sensation, and which they had frequently forgotten; but others were terrified by the magnitude of the punishments. For it was not possible to use any other remedy for the ignorance of what is beneficial than the dread of the punishment ordained by law. For this alone even now keeps the vulgar in awe, and prevents them from doing any thing, either publicly or privately, which is not beneficial [to the community]. But if all men were similarly capable of surveying and recollecting what is advantageous, there would be no need of laws, but men would spontaneously avoid such things as are prohibited, and perform such as they were ordered to do. For a survey of what is useful and detrimental, is a sufficient incentive to the avoidance of the one and the choice of the other. But the infliction of punishment has a reference to those who do not foresee what is beneficial. For impending punishment forcibly compels such as these to subdue those impulses which lead them to useless actions, and to do that which is right.
9. Hence also, legislators ordained, that even involuntary manslaughter should not be entirely void of punishment; in order that they

might not only afford no pretext for the voluntary imitation of those deeds which were involuntarily performed, but also that they might prevent many things of this kind from taking place, which happen, in reality, involuntarily. For neither is this advantageous through the same causes, by which men were forbidden voluntarily to destroy each other. Since, therefore, of involuntary deeds, some proceed from a cause which is unstable, and which cannot be guarded against by human nature; but others are produced by our negligence and inattention to different circumstances; hence legislators, wishing to restrain that indolence which is injurious to our neighbours, did not even leave an involuntary noxious deed without punishment, but, through the fear of penalties, prevented the commission of numerous offences of this kind. I also am of opinion, that the slaughters which are allowed by law, and which receive their accustomed expiations through certain purifications, were introduced by those ancient legislators, who first very properly instituted these things for no other reason than that they wished to prevent men as much as possible from voluntary slaughter. For the vulgar everywhere require something which may impede them from promptly performing what is not advantageous [to the community]. Hence those who first perceived this to be the case, not only ordained the punishment of fines, but also excited a certain other irrational dread, though proclaiming those not to be pure who in any way whatever had slain a man, unless they used purifications after the commission of the deed. For that part of the soul which is void of intellect, being variously disciplined, acquired a becoming mildness, certain taming arts having been from the first invented for the purpose of subduing the irrational impulses of desire, by those who governed the people. And one of the precepts promulgated on this occasion was, that men should not destroy each other without discrimination.

10. Those, however, who first defined what we ought to do, and what we ought not, very properly did not forbid us to kill other animals.

For the advantage arising from these is effected by a contrary practice, since it is not possible that men could be preserved, unless they endeavoured to defend those who are nurtured with themselves from the attacks of other animals. At that time, therefore, some of those, of the most elegant manners, recollecting that they abstained from slaughter because it was useful to the public safety, they also reminded the rest of the people in their mutual associations of what was the consequence of this abstinence; in order that, by refraining from the slaughter of their kindred, they might preserve that communion which greatly contributes to the peculiar safety of each individual. But it was not only found to be useful for men not to separate from each other, and not to do any thing injurious to those who were collected together in the same place, for the purpose of repelling the attacks of animals of another species; but also for defence against men whose design was to act nefariously. To a certain extent, therefore, they abstained from the slaughter of men, for these reasons, viz. in order that there might be a communion among them in things that are necessary, and that a certain utility might be afforded in each of the above-mentioned incommunities. In the course of time, however, when the offspring of mankind, through their intercourse with each other, became more widely extended, and animals of a different species were expelled, certain persons directed their attention in a rational way to what was useful to men in their mutual nutriment, and did not alone recall this to their memory in an irrational manner.

11. Hence they endeavoured still more firmly to restrain those who readily destroyed each other, and who, through an oblivion of past transactions, prepared a more imbecile defence. But in attempting to effect this, they introduced those legal institutes which still remain in cities and nations; the multitude spontaneously assenting to them, in consequence of now perceiving, in a greater degree, the advantage arising from an association with each other. For the destruction of every thing noxious, and the preservation of that

which is subservient to its extermination, similarly contribute to a fearless life. And hence it is reasonable to suppose, that one of the above-mentioned particulars was forbidden, but that the other was not prohibited. Nor must it be said, that the law allows us to destroy some animals which are not corruptive of human nature, and which are not in any other way injurious to our life. For as I may say, no animal among those which the law permits us to kill is of this kind; since, if we suffered them to increase excessively, they would become injurious to us. But through the number of them which is now preserved, certain advantages are imparted to human life. For sheep and oxen, and every such like animal, when the number of them is moderate, are beneficial to our necessary wants; but if they become redundant in the extreme, and far exceed the number which is sufficient, they then become detrimental to our life; the latter by employing their strength, in consequence of participating of this through an innate power of nature, and the former, by consuming the nutriment which springs up from the earth for our benefit alone. Hence, through this cause, the slaughter of animals of this kind is not prohibited, in order that as many of them as are sufficient for our use, and which we may be able easily to subdue, may be left. For it is not with horses, oxen, and sheep, and with all tame animals, as it is with lions and wolves, and, in short, with all such as are called savage animals, that, whether the number of them is small or great, no multitude of them can be assumed, which, if left, would alleviate the necessity of our life. And on this account, indeed, we utterly destroy some of them; but of others, we take away as many as are found to be more than commensurate to our use.

12. On this account, from the above-mentioned causes, it is similarly requisite to think, that what pertains to the eating of animals, was ordained by those who from the first established the laws; and that the advantageous and the disadvantageous were the causes why some animals were permitted to be eaten and others not. So that those who assert, that every thing beautiful and just subsists

conformably to the peculiar opinions of men respecting those who establish the laws, are full of a certain most profound stupidity. For it is not possible that this thing can take place in any other way than that in which the other utilities of life subsist, such as those that are salubrious, and an innumerable multitude of others. Erroneous opinions, however, are entertained in many particulars, both of a public and private nature. For certain persons do not perceive those legal institutes, which are similarly adapted to all men; but some, conceiving them to rank among things of an indifferent nature, omit them; while others, who are of a contrary opinion, think that such things as are not universally profitable, are every where advantageous. Hence, through this cause, they adhere to things which are inappropriate; though in certain particulars they discover what is advantageous to themselves, and what contributes to general utility. And among these are to be enumerated the eating of animals, and the legally ordained destructions which are instituted by most nations on account of the peculiarity of the region. It is not necessary, however, that these institutes should be preserved by us, because we do not dwell in the same place as those did by whom they were made. If, therefore, it was possible to make a certain compact with other animals in the same manner as with men, that we should not kill them, nor they us, and that they should not be indiscriminately destroyed by us, it would be well to extend justice as far as to this; for this extent of it would be attended with security. But since it is among things impossible, that animals which are not recipients of reason should participate with us of law, on this account, utility cannot be in a greater degree procured by security from other animals, than from inanimate natures. But we can alone obtain security from the liberty which we now possess of putting them to death. And such are the arguments of the Epicureans.

PHILODEMUS, On Piety, col. 38-39 [5]

[...] similarly Hermarchus [declared] that [...] soul from gods derives many goods, and, in the first book of his *Against Empedokles* that they have affinity for some and opposite for others.

PHILODEMUS, On Piety, col. 19-20 [5]

Likewise Hermarchus in the final book of his *Against Empedokles* also cites this passage, adding: ‘Concerning metaphor he [sc. Empedokles] made use in human fashion of the connection with the (divine) entity for which worship and verbal attendance in cult take place’; and in Epicurus’ case this is shown by his eagerness for sharing in the mysteries at Athens [...]

PHILODEMUS, On Piety, col. 80 [5]

[...] Hermarchus says, that the god does not seem to harm wrongdoers, even if the worst of mankind escape notice according to this argument.

PLUTARCH, De Defectu Oraculorum, 20 [3]

The one thing that I have heard the Epicureans say with reference to the demigods introduced by Empedocles is that it is not possible, if they are bad and sinful, that they should be happy and of long life, inasmuch as vice has a large measure of blindness and the tendency to encounter destructive agencies [...]

PROCLUS, In Timaeum, I [6]

But, says the Epicurean Eurimachus [sc. Hermarchus], how can we avoid proceeding to infinity, if in the impulse to every small thing, we require prayer: for though we should pray, we shall be in want of another prayer, and we shall no where stop?

CICERO, De nat. deor., I, 33 [7]

But do you think they were all madmen who thought that a Deity could by some possibility exist without hands and feet? Does not even this consideration have weight with you when you consider what is the use and advantage of limbs in men, and lead you to admit that the Gods have no need of them? What necessity can there be of feet, without walking; or of hands, if there is nothing to be grasped? The same may be asked of the other parts of the body, in which nothing is vain, nothing useless, nothing superfluous; therefore we may infer that no art can imitate the skill of nature. Shall the Deity, then, have a tongue, and not speak—teeth, palate, and jaws, though he will have no use for them? Shall the members which nature has given to the body for the sake of generation be useless to the Deity? Nor would the internal parts be less superfluous than the external. What comeliness is there in the heart, the lungs, the liver, and the rest of them, abstracted from their use? I mention these because you place them in the Deity on account of the beauty of the human form.

Depending on these dreams, not only Epicurus, Metrodorus, and Hermachus declaimed against Pythagoras, Plato, and Empedocles, but that little harlot Leontium presumed to write against Theophrastus [...]

PHILODEMUS, On Death, III, col. XIII [8]

One must believe with Hermarchus that the gods draw in breath and exhale it, for without this, again, we cannot conceive them as such living beings as we have already called them, as neither can one conceive of fish without need in addition of water, nor birds [without additional need] of wings for their flight through the air; for such [living beings] are not better conceived [as without need of their environment] [...] nor should one claim that there are either prose or metrical sounds unaccompanied by breathing in and out, as neither is their snow without whiteness nor fire without heat; and we must claim that the gods use both voice and conversation to one another; for we will not conceive them as the more happy or the more indissoluble, [Hermarchus] says, by

their neither speaking, nor conversing with each other, but resembling human beings that cannot speak; for since we really do employ voice, all of us who are not disabled persons, it is even the height of foolishness that the gods should either be disabled, or not resemble us in this point, since neither men nor gods can create utterances in any other way. And particularly since for good men, the sharing of discourse with men like them showers down on them indescribably pleasure. And by Zeus one must suppose the gods possess the Hellenic language or one not far from it, and that their voices in expressing rationalist are clearest [...]

AGAINST EMPEDOCLES (miscellaneous fragments)
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PLUTARCH, Against Colotes, 28, 1123 b [1]

But to let pass all the rest, what is more evident and more generally believed by all men, than that those who are seized with melancholy distempers, and whose brain is troubled and whose wits are distracted, do, when the fit is on them and their understanding altered and transported, imagine that they see and hear things which they neither see nor hear? Whence they frequently cry out:

Women in black arrayed bear in their hands,
To burn mine eyes, torches and fiery brands.

And again:

See, in her arms she holds my mother dear.

— Eurip. Iph. Taur. 289.

These, and many other illusions more strange and tragical than these,—resembling those mormos and bugbears which they themselves laugh at and deride, as they are described by Empedocles to be, “with sinuous feet and undeveloped hands, bodied like ox and faced like man,”—

with certain other prodigious and unnatural phantoms, these men have gathered together out of dreams and the alienations of distracted minds, and affirm that none of them is a deception of the sight, a falsity, or inconsistency; but that all these imaginations are true, being bodies and figures that come from the ambient air.

DIOGENES OF OINOANDA, fr. 42 [4]

[...] [Empedocles in regard to these matters borrowed his philosophy from Pythagoras, ... going astray he says] that the souls transmigrate from body to body after the first has been destroyed, and that this happens *ad infinitum*, as if someone is not going to say to him: “Empedocles, if the souls are able to survive independently and you have no [need] to drag them into the nature of a living creature and to transfer them for this reason, how is the transmigration of use to you? For in [the] intervening time, during [which] their transmigration [is effected, interrupting] the nature of a living creature, they will be thrown into complete confusion. If on the other hand they are [in no way] able to survive [without] a body, why [exactly] do you give yourself – or rather them – this trouble, dragging [them] about and making them transmigrate from one [creature to] another? And these [...] For [it would be preferable] to make the souls independent and absolutely indestructible and not to cause them to embark on a long, circuitous voyage, so that eventually your theory, although still fallacious, would command more respect. Otherwise we shall disbelieve you, Empedocles, with regard to [these] transmigrations”.

FROM OTHER WORKS (on sophistic rhetoric)
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PHILODEMUS, De rhet. I [9]

Those Epicureans are to be censured who assume that sophistic is not an art, and thus run counter to the teachings of Epicurus, Metrodorus and Hermarchus, as we shall show later. Such Epicureans are almost guilty of parricide [...]

PHILODEMUS, De rhet. II, sec. II b [9]

We now turn to the statement: We are not responsible for the statement that sophistic is an art and that politics is dependent on observation and practice, but this comes from the founders of our sect, not from us. I shall show where in the works of Epicurus Zeno found the expression of this doctrine. In the first place what would one make of the continual use by Epicurus in his book on rhetoric of expressions like this: ‘schools of rhetoric’, ‘the ability produced by the schools’, ‘profession’, ‘instruction about speeches and enthymemes’ and the like?

Turning to Hermarchus, we find the same opinion in an epistle to Theophides. Alexinus in his work on education criticized the rhetorical sophists for wasting their time on investigation of useless subjects, such as diction, memory, and the interpretation of obscure passages in the poets. He added, “We can grant that they try to speak about useful subjects, by which it is possible to settle questions of philosophy; for if they do not possess ἐπιστήμη they do use conjecture which is the instrument of the rhetor.” To this Hermarchus replied, “If by speaking about useful subjects he means speaking about such matters as will bring them pecuniary reward, he is insane.”

Hermarchus then continues [Lacuna in which was shown the uselessness of these so-called useful subjects which the rhetoricians discuss:] “It is better to lose one’s property than to keep it by lawsuits which disturb the calm of the soul.”

Nor can we praise the rhetors for teaching their pupils to give advice on public questions. Hermarchus says: “If he says that the rhetors deserve admiration for being useful statesmen his statement will not stand the test. For cooks and carpenters give useful advice which need not be put in the form of a speech. Similarly any farmer without rhetorical training, even without elementary education can discover what is useful for the state.”

“Furthermore, what are we to make of Alexinus’ statement that rhetorical speeches depend not on knowledge but on experience and conjecture? He cannot mean that they have no dialectical syllogisms.

At any rate he rebukes Eubulides for despising speeches without syllogisms.”

We have given these last quotations in case anyone desires to have them, realizing that they will seem to have been written about some other subject than the one under discussion.

PHILODEMUS, De rhet. II, sec. II b [9]

Epicurean authorities hold that sophistic rhetoric does not perform the task of practical and political rhetoric. This can be proved by passages from Epicurus, Hermarchus and Metrodorus. The ability to speak in assembly and court comes from practice and observation of political events.

PHILODEMUS, De rhet., Hypomn. [9]

The rhetors on the other hand would not seem to anyone to lack rhetoric, which is the proper possession of a rhetor. For none of those called by common consent powerful and noble rhetors can be found without political experience and faculty. But it is not one of the attributes of sophistical rhetoric qua rhetoric to be the art of politics, nor is the sophistical rhetor qua rhetor, a statesman; nor is the statesman qua statesman rhetor, as is evident from what Epicurus says in his *On Rhetoric* and Metrodorus in the first book *On Poems*, and Hermarchus in an *Epistle to Theophides*.

PHILODEMUS, De rhet. II, col. XXXV [10]

[...] having set out from education would not have been conceived but “illiterate fellows”—says Epicurus—and Hermarchus calls them boors, since learning involves the rational faculty [...]

PHILODEMUS, On Anger, col. XLV [13]

But also the Founders accept the idea that “the wise man will be enraged,” not according to that preconception, but according to the more general one. In fact, Epicurus makes clear in his *First Appellations* both that the sage “will experience rage” and (will experience it) “in moderation,” and Metrodorus, if he says “the rage of the wise man” in its proper sense, shows also that he feels it “very briefly.” That “he will feel rage” [...] also to Hermarchus [...] so that I am amazed at those who want to be textbook Epicureans, that they ignored these and the things I mentioned before, and as a result tried to demonstrate that, according to our Founders, “the sage will become wrathful.”

PHILODEMUS, On Property Management, col. XXIV-XXV [14]

To speak more precisely, acts of imparting money to one’s friends and, of one’s other acquaintances, to those free of wickedness [seem] to some people to amount to subtractions from and diminutions of the property. But in fact, according to Hermarchus, the cares bestowed upon such men represent more profitable acquisitions than lands, and they are the safest treasures with regard to the turns of fortune.

PHILODEMUS, On Flattery, pap. uned. 1675, col. X [0] - machine translation

Why do some flatterers flatter strongly and at the same time bitterly offend those they flatter? The main cause of this is explained by Hermarchus. He who leads an untroubled life, he says, and is not afflicted by great sorrows, despises with all his strength those who find themselves in difficulty because of each other; those who deal with politics in fact suffer and then add: we avoid them because of our great disagreement with them on many points, hating above all their giving great importance to gifts and honors [...] And regarding flatterers: they bitterly offend those same people they flatter, for what is disgusting in

their customs, but they are forced to flatter them strongly in order to thus be able to profit from the goods of their table [...]

STOBAEUS, Flor., IV, 34, 66 [0] - machine translation

By Hermarchus: Everyone's life has no certain boundaries, and it wanders in the throes of events without having anything certain in itself; hope gives courage to the soul; no mortal knows exactly where the future takes him; the deity guides mortals through all dangers. Often good luck blows against a bad aura.

STOBAEUS, Flor., IV, 51, 30 [0] - machine translation

By Hermarchus: death is very despicable: all action is nullified when the ability to suffer is lost.

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