

OF COMMON CONCEPTIONS, AGAINST THE STOICS.

LAMPRIAS, DIADUMENUS.

1. LAMPRIAS. You, O Diadumenus, seem not much to care, if any one thinks that you philosophize against the common notions; since you confess that you condemn also the senses, from whence the most part of these notions in a manner proceed, having for their seat and foundation the belief of such things as appear to us. But I beseech you, with what speed you can, either by reasons, incantations, or some other manner of discourse, to cure me, who come to you full, as I seem to myself, of great and strange perturbations; so much have I been shaken, and into such a perplexity of mind have I been brought, by certain Stoics, in other things indeed very good men and my familiar friends, but most bitterly and hostilely bent against the Academy. These, for some few words modestly spoken by me, have (for I will tell you no lie) rudely and unkindly reprehended me; angrily reputed and branding the ancient philosophers as sophisters and corrupters of students of philosophy, and subverters of regular doctrines; and saying things yet more absurd than these, they fell at last upon the conceptions, into which (they maintained) the Academics had brought a certain confusion and disturbance. At length one of them said, that he thought it was not by fortune, but by the providence of the Gods, that Chrysippus came into the world after Arcesilaus and before Carneades; of which the one was the author of the con-

tumelies and injuries done to custom, and the other flourished most of all the Academics. Chrysippus then, coming between them, by his writings against Arcesilaus, stopped also the way against the eloquence of Carneades, leaving indeed many things to the senses, as provisions against a siege, but wholly taking away the trouble about anticipations and conceptions, directing every one of them and putting it in its proper place ; so that they who will again embroil and disquiet matters should accomplish nothing, but be convinced of being malicious and deceitful sophisters. I, having been this morning set on fire by these discourses, want some cooling remedies to extinguish and take away this doubting, as an inflammation, out of my mind.

2. DIADUMENUS. You perhaps have suffered the same things with some of the vulgar. But if you believe the poets, who say that the ancient city Sipylus was overthrown by the providence of the Gods when they punished Tantalus, believe also the companions of the Stoa saying that Nature, not by chance but by divine providence, brought forth Chrysippus, when she had a mind to turn things upside down and alter the course of life ; for which purpose never any man was fitter than he. But as Cato said of Caesar, that never any but he came to the management of public affairs sober and considerately resolved on the ruin of the state ; so does this man seem to me with the greatest diligence and eloquence to overturn and demolish custom, as they who magnify the man testify, when they dispute against him concerning the sophism called Pseudomenos (or the Liar). For to say, my best friend, that a conclusion drawn from contrary positions is not manifestly false, and again to say that some arguments having true premises and true inductions may yet moreover have the contrary to their conclusions true, what conception of demonstration or what presumption of faith does it not overthrow ? They

say, that the polypus in the winter gnaws his own claws ; but the logic of Chrysippus, taking away and cutting off its own chiefest parts and principles, — what other notion has it left unsuspected of falsehood ? For the superstructures cannot be steady and sure, if the foundations remain not firm but are shaken with so many doubts and troubles. But as those who have dust or dirt upon their bodies, if they touch or rub the filth that is upon them, seem rather to increase than remove it ; so some men blame the Academics, and think them guilty of the faults with which they show themselves to be burdened. For who do more pervert the common conceptions than the Stoics ? But if you please, let us leave accusing them, and defend ourselves from the things with which they charge us.

3. LAMPRIAS. Methinks, Diadumenus, I am this day become a various and unconstant man. For erewhile I came dejected and trembling, as one that wanted an apology ; and now I am changed to an accuser, and desire to enjoy the pleasure of revenge, in seeing them all convicted of philosophizing against the common conceptions and presumptions, from which they think chiefly their doctrine is derived, whence they say that it alone agrees with Nature.

DIADUMENUS. Shall we then first attack those common and celebrated doctrines of theirs which themselves, gently admitting their absurdity, style paradoxes ; as that only wise men are kings, that they only are rich and fair, they only citizens and judges ? Or shall we send all this to the brokers, as old decayed frippery, and make our enquiry into such things as are most practical and with the greatest earnestness delivered by them ?

LAMPRIAS. I indeed like this best. For who is there that is not already full of the arguments brought against those paradoxes ?

4. DIADUMENUS. First then consider this, whether, according to the common conceptions, they can be said to

agree with Nature, who think all natural things indifferent, and esteem neither health, vigorousness of body, beauty, nor strength as desirable, commodious, profitable, or any way contributory to the completing of natural perfection; nor believe that their contraries, as maims, pains, disgraces, and diseases, are hurtful or to be shunned? To the latter of these they themselves say that Nature gives us an abhorrence, and an inclination to the former. Which very thing is not a little repugnant to common understanding, that Nature should incline us to such things as are neither good nor available, and avert us from such as are neither ill nor hurtful, and which is more, that she should render this inclination and this aversion so violent, that they who either possess not the one or fall into the other detest their life with good reason, and withdraw themselves out of it.

5. I think also that this is said by them against common sense, that Nature herself is indifferent, and yet that it is good to agree with Nature. For it is not our duty either to follow the law or be persuaded by argument, unless the law and argument be good and honest. And this indeed is the least of their errors. But if, as Chrysippus has written in his First Book concerning Exhortation, a happy life consists only in living according to virtue, other things (as he says) being nothing to us, nor co-operating any ways towards it, Nature is not only indifferent, but foolish also and stupid, in inclining us to such things as belong nothing to us; and we also are fools in thinking felicity to be an agreeing with Nature, which draws us after such things as contribute nothing to happiness. For what can be more agreeable to common sense, than that, as desirable things are requisite to live commodiously, so natural things are necessary that we may live according to Nature? Now these men say not so; but having settled the living according to Nature for their end, do nevertheless hold those things which are according to Nature to be indifferent.

6. Nor is this less repugnant to common sense, that an intelligent and prudent man should not be equally affected to equal good things, but should put no value on some, and be ready to undergo and suffer any thing for others, though the things themselves are neither greater nor less one than another. For they say, It is the same thing to abstain from the enjoyment of an old woman that has one foot in the grave, and . . . since in both cases we do what duty requires. And yet for this, as a great and glorious thing, they should be ready to die ; when as to boast of the other would be shameful and ridiculous. And even Chrysippus himself in his commentary concerning Jupiter, and in the Third Book of the Gods, says, that it were a poor, absurd, and impertinent thing to glory in such acts, as proceeding from virtue, as bearing valiantly the stinging of a wasp, or abstaining chastely from an old woman that lies a dying. Do not they then philosophize against the common conception, who profess nothing to be more commendable than those things which yet themselves are ashamed to praise ? For how can that be desirable or to be approved, which is worthy neither of praise nor admiration, but the praisers and admirers of which they esteem absurd and ridiculous ?

7. And yet this will (I suppose) appear to you more against common sense, that a wise man should take no care whether he enjoys or not enjoys the greatest good things, but should carry himself after the same manner in these things, as in those that are indifferent and in their management and administration. For all of us, " whoever we are that eat the fruit of the spacious earth," judge that desirable, good, and profitable, which being present we use, and absent we want and desire. But that which no man thinks worth his concern, either for his profit or delight, is indifferent. For we by no other means distinguish a laborious man from a trifler, who is for the most part also

employed in action, but that the one busies himself in useless matters and indifferently, and the other in things commodious and profitable. But these men act quite contrary; for with them, a wise and prudent man, being conversant in many comprehensions and memories of comprehension, esteems few of them to belong to him; and not caring for the rest, he thinks he has neither more or less by remembering that he lately had the comprehension of Dion sneezing or Theon playing at ball. And yet every comprehension in a wise man, and every memory having assurance and firmness, is a great, yea, a very great good. When therefore his health fails, when some organ of his senses is disordered, or when his wealth is lost, is a wise man so careless as to think that none of these things concern him? Or does he, "when sick, give fees to the physicians: for the gaining of riches sail to Leucon, governor in the Bosphorus, or travel to Idanthyrus, king of the Scythians," as Chrysippus says? And being deprived of some of his senses, does he not grow weary even of life? How then do they not acknowledge that they philosophize against the common notions, employing so much care and diligence on things indifferent, and recking not whether they have or have not great good things?

8. But this is also yet against the common conceptions, that he who is a man should not rejoice when coming from the greatest evils to the greatest goods. Now their wise men suffer this. Being changed from extreme viciousness to the highest virtue, and at the same time escaping a most miserable life and attaining to a most happy one, he shows no sign of joy, nor does this so great change lift him up or yet move him, being delivered from all infelicity and vice, and coming to a certain sure and firm perfection of virtue. This also is repugnant to common sense, to maintain that the being immutable in one's judgments and resolutions is the greatest of goods, and yet that he

who has attained to the height wants not this, nor cares for it when he has it, nay, many times will not so much as stretch forth a finger for this security and constancy, which nevertheless themselves esteem the sovereign and perfect good. Nor do the Stoics say only these things, but they add also this to them, — that the continuance of time increases not any good thing; but if a man shall be wise but a minute of an hour, he will not be any way inferior in happiness to him who has all his time practised virtue and led his life happily in it. Yet, whilst they thus boldly affirm these things, they on the contrary also say, that a short-lived virtue is nothing worth; “For what advantage would the attainment of wisdom be to him who is immediately to be swallowed up by the waves or tumbled down headlong from a precipice? What would it have benefited Lichas, if being thrown by Hercules, as from a sling into the sea, he had been on a sudden changed from vice to virtue?” These therefore are the positions of men who not only philosophize against the common conceptions but also confound their own, if the having been but a little while endued with virtue is no way short of the highest felicity, and at the same time nothing worth.

9. Nor is this the strangest thing you will find in their doctrine; but their being of opinion that virtue and happiness, when present, are frequently not perceived by him who enjoys them, nor does he discern that, having but a little before been most miserable and foolish, he is of a sudden become wise and happy. For it is not only childish to say that he who is possessed of wisdom is ignorant of this thing alone, that he is wise, and knows not that he is delivered from folly; but, to speak in general, they make goodness to have very little weight or strength, if it does not give so much as a feeling of it when it is present. For according even to them, it is not by nature imperceptible; nay, even Chrysippus in his books of the *End*

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