

## 1. The Hippocratic Letters

**T1.** « why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry or the arts are melancholic, and some to such an extent that they are infected by the diseases arising from the black bile [...]? ».<sup>1</sup>

**T2** « For, previously inattentive to everything, including himself, he is now constantly wakeful night and day, laughs at everything large and small, and thinks life in general is worth nothing. »<sup>2</sup>

**T3** « So that among the Scythians a man became a philosopher, and among the Athenians it is plenty of them. Again, in Abdera there are many fools, but in Athens there are few ».<sup>3</sup>

**T4** « when you know how passionately people in general, striving for what is not worth striving for, pour out their lives in activities that are of no value, busying themselves with things that deserve laughter ».<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Plato: Letter VII

**T5** « and I was forced to say, in praise of true philosophy, that from her height alone was it possible to discern what the nature of justice is, either in the state or in the individual, and that the ills of the human race would never end until either those who are sincerely and truly lovers of wisdom come into political power, or the rulers of our cities, by the grace of God, learn true philosophy. »<sup>5</sup>

**T6** « In my association with Dion, who was then a young man, I imparted to him my ideas of what was best for men and urged him to put them into practice; and in doing so I was in a way contriving, though quite unwittingly, the destruction of the tyranny that later came to pass. For Dion was in all things quick to learn, especially in the matters upon which I talked with him; and he listened with a zeal and attentiveness I had never encountered in any young man, and he resolved to spend the rest of his life differently from most Italians and Sicilians, since he had come to love virtue more than pleasure and luxury. For this reason his way of life was more than annoying to those who guided themselves by the practices of tyranny, until the death of Dionysius. »<sup>6</sup>

**T7** « I put up with all this, however, holding fast to the original purpose for which I had come, hoping that he might somehow come to desire the philosophic life; but I never overcame his resistance »<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle *Problemata* XXX . Transl. H. Rackham, 1970, 155.

<sup>2</sup> (Pseudo-)Hippocrates *Letter X* 1 4-6. Transl. Smith, 1990, 56-7.

<sup>3</sup> Galen *Quod animi mores corp. temp. sequ.* V, 461 [IV p. 822, 3 - 6 K.]

<sup>4</sup> (Pseudo-)Hippocrates *Letter XVII* 4 359, 5 - 360, 7: ὅση σπουδῇ περὶ τὰ ἀσπούδαστα, φιλοτιμεύμενοι πρήσσειν τὰ μηδενὸς ἄξια, πάντες ἄνθρωποι τὸν βίον ἀναλίσκουσι, γελώτων ἄξια διοικεῦντες. Transl. Smith, 1990, 81.

<sup>5</sup> Plato *Ep.* VII 326 a-b. Transl. G. R. Morrow, 1997, p. 1648.

<sup>6</sup> Plato *Ep.* VII 327 a-b: ἐβίω / ζῶσιν. Transl. G. R. Morrow, 1997, 1648-9.

<sup>7</sup> Plato *Ep.* VII 330 b: τῆς φιλοσόφου ζωῆς. Transl. G. R. Morrow, 1997, 1651.

**T8** « This is the principle which a wise man must follow in his relations towards his own city. Let him warn her, if he thinks her constitution is corrupt and there is a prospect that his words will be listened to and not put him in danger of his life; but let him not use violence upon his fatherland to bring about a change of constitution. If what he thinks is best can only be accomplished by the exile and slaughter of men, let him keep his peace and pray for the welfare of himself and the city. In this way, then, I venture to advise you, as Dion and I used to advise Dionysius, first of all to make his daily life such as to give him the greatest possible mastery over himself and win him loyal friends and followers. »<sup>8</sup>

**T9** « Dionysius, though he united all Sicily into a single city (for he knew that he could trust no one), was scarcely able to survive, for he was poor in friends and loyal followers, and the possession or lack of these is the best indication of a man's virtue or vice »<sup>9</sup>

**T10** « I, an Athenian citizen, a friend of Dion and his ally, came to the tyrant in order to bring about friendship, not war, between them; but the slanderers worsted me in this contest [...] Later Dion came home bringing with him two brothers from Athens, friends whom he had acquired not through philosophy, but by way of that facile comradeship which is the basis of most friendship, and which is cultivated by hospitality and mystic rites and initiation into secrets; because of these associations and the service they had rendered Dion in returning to Syracuse, these two men who came with him had become his comrades. But when they arrived in Sicily and saw how Dion was being slandered among the people of Syracuse whom he had liberated, and was being accused of plotting to become a tyrant, not only did they betray their comrade and host, but they became as it were his murderers, since they stood by with arms in their hands to assist his assassins. »<sup>10</sup>

**T11** « I have said all this for the purpose of advising Dion's friends and relatives; and to all that has been said I add the same advice and the same doctrine that I have given twice before. Do not subject Sicily nor any other state to the despotism of men, but to the rule of laws; this at least is my doctrine. »<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Plato *Ep.* VII 331 c-d: ὅτι μάλιστα ἔσεσθαι μέλλοι καὶ πιστοὺς φίλους τε καὶ ἐταίρους κτήσεσθαι. Transl. G. R. Morrow, 1997, 1652.

<sup>9</sup> Plato *Ep.* VII 332 c: πένης γὰρ ἦν ἀνδρῶν φίλων καὶ πιστῶν. Transl. G. R. Morrow, 1997, 1652.

<sup>10</sup> Plato *Ep.* VII 333 d - 334 a: φιλίαν. Transl. G. R. Morrow, 1997, 1653.

<sup>11</sup> Plato *Ep.* VII 334 d. Transl. G. R. Morrow, 1997, 1654.

### *C. Clemen's "PWLed" criteria<sup>12</sup>*

1. the Christian spiritual exercise in question cannot be completely nor satisfactorily explained in another, closer way, i.e. from Christianity or Judaism, or from a religion which may already have had an influence on the latter. Even if only one detail in the Christian spiritual exercise in question points to such an influence, the view or institution must not therefore be declared to be entirely of the same kind.

2. the philosophical spiritual exercise which is said to have influenced an early Christian one, must not only correspond to it externally but also correspond to it to some extent, in content. Certainly, a conception or institution can change somewhat in the transition from one religion to another; but first of all, if such a transition is to be accepted, the two objects to be explained based on each other, must at least correspond to some extent. And even then the Christian spiritual exercise may only be derived from another philosophical one on condition that this had already existed before and in the environment of primitive Christianity, so that it could really have an effect on it.

3. If only the latter, but not the former, is the case, then Christian spiritual exercise may have influenced that other exercise; or both may only go back to a common source, as is to be assumed at any rate if the other spiritual exercise existed neither before nor in the vicinity of primitive Christianity, but is so similar to it in one respect that they cannot have arisen independently of each other. Because of this last principle, a sharp distinction must be made between the individual phases of the development of early Christianity and it must be ascertained when and where each exercise that can be considered as a derivation from the spiritual exercises originated.

### *3. Lluís Vives' Correspondence*

**T12** « Your parents had the audacity to explore new seas, new lands, new and unknown constellations beyond Portugal. First of all, after driving out the Agarenes, they occupied the shores of the Atlantic Sea; penetrating further inland, they penetrated along the path of the sun to the world in front of us, reaching the southern sea south of Ethiopia; from there they passed into the Red Sea and into the maw of the Persian Gulf, where they built their fortresses and, crossing the mouth of the Indus River, they sought for themselves lands in their own right in the fertile and fortunate plains of all India. [...] And certainly, with these discoveries the whole orb of the earth was made manifest to mankind [...] But above all these facts, the propagation throughout the breadth and length of the planet of our sacred religion with so much glory of the Christian name stands out. »<sup>13</sup>

**T13** « Finally, the prince must do nothing that does not concern the public interest more than his own particular conveniences, and he must be well persuaded that the day he began to rule he clothed himself with the desires and the will of the people, at the same time that he stripped himself of his own particular desires. »<sup>14</sup>

**T14** « Finally, the prince must do nothing which is not directed more to the public good than to his own private advantage. And he must be persuaded that the moment he inaugurated his mandate, he assumed the desires and the will of his people and divested himself of his own. »<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Based on *Der Einfluß der Mysterienreligionen auf das älteste Christentum*, 1913, 2-3.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Vives to Juan III, King of Portugal; Bruges, July 1531. Jiménez, 1978, 563.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Vives to the Prince Ferdinand, Lovain, 1520. Jiménez, 1978, 204.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Vives to the Prince Ferdinand, Lovain, 1520. Jiménez, 1978, 208.

**T15** « you (sc. Ferdinand, the Archduke of Austria, brother of the Emperor Charles V) handle books with great diligence, particularly those that deal with the government of cities and kingdoms, and also those that refer to the good and happy life and teach the way to attain it. Proof of this is that you order your physician, a man of great repute, to explain to you every day the treatise of Erasmus on the training of princes, and at no time do you let fall from your hands that book which treats of training the prince in Christian virtue. And this idea made me change my mind and I determined to dedicate this work, whatever it may be, to you. »<sup>16</sup>

**T16** « You asked me to write you a brief plan of studies, which could serve as a guide for your daughter Maria's tutor in the performance of her duties. I have gladly complied with your wishes and would like to be able to fulfil them in more important undertakings. And since you have chosen a very learned and honourable preceptor, as was proper, I have confined myself to pointing out the subjects to him with my finger; he will explain the rest. [...] I pray the Lord that this curriculum will contribute effectively to the cultural and moral formation of your daughter. Farewell, and I want you to know that I am completely addicted to Your Majesty. »<sup>17</sup>

**T17** « It is the custom of princes to use in defence of their person or their life an escort who is always at their side, a custom more general than wise and good. Thus princes do nothing more than testify to their fear, which is almost always rooted in their own conscience. [...] As for me, at the entreaty of your mother, an illustrious and very good woman, I will offer you an escort for your soul. She will give you more security and more peace of mind than any group of guards [...] For greater danger to the soul is the cunning and violence of vices than external or internal attacks on the body, and one should love the soul more than the body [...]. You will therefore receive two hundred guards or more, with whom you will become so familiar that you will not allow them to leave your side for a moment, like flesh and blood, night or day, at home or in the street, lest, deprived of their help, you fall prey to the devil [...] I gave them the name of symbols, like insignia, as is the ancient custom for princes to adorn themselves, a custom that still lasts in our days [...]. »<sup>18</sup>

**T18** « Your kindness, most exalted King, for some years nourished my pleasant dedication to my studies. It is now three years since I received no payment from you. It does not behoove me to bear with displeasure that I am not granted what is also not due to me; but to give thanks for a benefit that has lasted so long. Therefore I thank you once and many times, and I beg you earnestly to use me in no other way than as one who wishes you every happiness and prosperity. It is also a long time since I have received any mercy from the Queen, but I wish both you and her to see you very close and happy, while you pass the short space of life that remains to you. »<sup>19</sup>

#### *4. Descartes, Elisabeth of Bohemia, and Christine of Sweden*

**T19** « Monsieur, I have learned, with very great joy and regret, the intention you had to see me a few days ago, and I have been equally moved, both by your charity in consenting to communicate with an ignorant and indocile person [...], that, banishing every other consideration from mind, save that of availing myself of it, I beseech you tell me how the soul of man (since it is but a thinking substance) can determine the spirits of the body to produce voluntary actions [...] Knowing you to be the best doctor for my soul, I therefore freely reveal to you the weak-

---

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Vives to Prince Ferdinand, Lovain, 1520. Jiménez, 1978, 202-3.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Vives to Catalina of Aragon, Queen of England, Oxford, 7th October 1523. Jiménez, 1978, 324-5.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from Vives to Maria Tudor, Bruges, 1st July 1524. Jiménez, 1978, 369-71.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Vives to Henry VIII, King of England, Bruges, 13th January 1531. Jiménez, 1978, 548-50.

nesses of its speculations, and I trust that in observing the oath of Hippocrates you will furnish it remedies without publicizing them »<sup>20</sup>

**T20** « That makes me confess, without shame, that I have discovered in myself all the causes of error you note in your letter, and that I have been as yet unable to banish them entirely, since the life I am constrained to lead does not allow me enough free time to acquire a habit of meditation in accordance with your rules [...] I hope, to excuse my stupidity in being unable to comprehend, from what you have previously said concerning weight, the idea by which we should judge how the soul (nonextended and immaterial) can move the body; nor why this power, that you have then under the name of quality falsely attributed to it as carrying the body toward the center of the earth, ought persuade us that body can be pushed by something immaterial any more than the demonstration of a contrary truth confirms us in the opinion of its impossibility; principally because this idea can be feigned out of ignorance of what truly moves these bodies toward the center; and then, since no material cause presents itself to the senses, one would have attributed it — which I have only been able to conceive as a negation of matter — to its contrary, the immaterial, which cannot have any communication with it. [...] »<sup>21</sup>

**T21** « A short time ago I received letters from my friend in that country (i.e. Sweden) informing me that the Queen, having been at Upsala, the location of that country's academy, had wished to hear a harangue of a professor of eloquence whom he deems the most capable and reasonable in that academy; and the Queen laid down as subject of the discourse the sovereign good of this life; but after having heard this harangue she had said these people but embellished matters, and that it would be necessary to know my opinion [...] I am sending to M. Chanut (i.e. Descartes' friend in Sweden) certain writings that contain at greater length my sentiments in regard to the same matter, so that, if it pleases her to see them, he can present her with them. The writings are the letters I have had the honor of writing to your Highness regarding Seneca's book, *concerning the blessed life* —extending to half of the sixth letter, where, having defined the passions in general, I say I find difficulty in enumerating them. In consequence of which, I am also sending him the small treatise on the passions which I have had some pains to have transcribed from a rather confused rough draft that I had kept, and I am informing him that I wish him not to present these writings to the Queen forthwith, because I should fear not sufficiently guarding the respect I owe to her Majesty if I sent her letters prepared for another rather than writing to her whatever I should deem agreeable to her; »<sup>22</sup>

**T22** « Madame, I have learned from M. Chanut<sup>23</sup> that it pleases your Majesty that it be my honor to explain to her the opinion I hold regarding the sovereign good, considered in the sense that the ancient philosophers have spoken of it [...] One can consider the goodness of each thing in itself, without relating it to others, in which sense it is evident that God is the sovereign good, because he is incomparably more perfect than creatures; but one can also relate it to us, and in this sense I see nothing we ought to esteem good, except what in some fashion pertains to us and is a perfection for us to possess. Thus the ancient philosophers — who, being unilluminated by the light of faith, knew nothing of supranatural blessedness — would review only the goods we can possess in this life; and among such goods they sought the one that was sovereign, that is to say, the principal and greatest. But, for me to be able to determine it, I consider that we ought to esteem good, from our point of view, only those things we possess, or else have the power of acquiring. That being assumed, it seems to me the sovereign good of all men

---

<sup>20</sup> Letter CCCI from Elizabeth of Bohemia to Descartes, The Hague, 16th May 1643. Blom, 1978, 105-6.

<sup>21</sup> Letter CCCVIII from Elizabeth of Bohemia to Descartes, The Hague, 20th June 1643. Blom, 1978, 111-2.

<sup>22</sup> Letter CDXCVII from Descartes to Elizabeth of Bohemia, Egmond de Hoef, 20th November 1647. Blom, 1978, 232-3.

<sup>23</sup> Chanut was French ambassador to the court of Sweden. He was brother-in-law of Descartes' translator, Clerselier. Chanut interested Queen Christina in Descartes and helped secure her invitation for the philosopher to come to Sweden. Chanut and Descartes became friends, and after the philosopher's death Chanut took care of his papers.

together is an amalgamation or collection of all the goods, as much of the soul as of the body and fortune, that can be in individual men; but the sovereign good of each person in particular is a completely different thing, and consists only in a firm will to do well, and the contentment which that produces. [...] As for goods of the body and fortune, they do not depend absolutely upon us; and those of the soul all relaxe to two principal goods, namely, the one to know, and the other to will, what is good; yet such knowledge is often beyond our forces; that is why there remains only our will of which we can absolutely dispose. [...] It is in that alone that all the virtues consist; it is that alone which, properly speaking, merits praise and glory; finally it is from that alone that always results the greatest and most solid contentment of life. And thus I deem that in that consists the sovereign good. And in this way I think I reconcile the two most contrary and most celebrated opinions of the ancients, namely that of Zeno, who placed the sovereign good in virtue, or honor, and that of Epicurus, who placed it in the contentment to which he gave the name of pleasure. [...] »<sup>24</sup>

**T23** « It compensates for my flaws better than would that which I passionately desired — to receive those commands from your lips had I been able to be admitted to the honor of paying you reverence, and of offering you my very-humble services, when I was last at The Hague. For I would have had too many marvels to admire at the same time; and seeing a discourse more than human flow from a frame so similar to those painters bestow upon angels, I would have been ravished, just as, it seems to me, are bound to be they who, in coming from earth, enter for the first time upon heaven »<sup>25</sup>

**T24** « Two days ago I received from Sweden a letter from Monsieur the Resident of France, wherein he proposes to me a question on behalf of the Queen, to whom he has made me known by showing her my response to another letter he had sent to me previously. And the manner he describes this Queen, with the words he tells of her, makes me esteem her so highly, that it seems to me you would be worthy of each other's conversation; and so few of the rest of the world are meriting of it, that I think it would not be difficult for your Highness to form a very close friendship with her; and besides the contentment of mind it would bring, it would be desirable on divers accounts. »<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Letter CDXCV from Descartes to Christine of Sweden, Egmond de Hoef, 20th November 1647. Blom, 1978, 227-9.

<sup>25</sup> Letter CCCI from Descartes to Elizabeth of Bohemia, (Egmond du Hoef, 21st May 1643) Blom, 1978, 107.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from Descartes to Elizabeth of Bohemia, The Hague, 6th June 1647. Blom, 1978, 225.



**Nicolas Moeyaert, Hippocrates visiting Democritus (17th century)**



**Noordt, Hippocrates visiting  
Democritus in Abdera (17th  
century)**





**Aj. A. Backer, Hippocrates Visits Democritus in Abdera,  
ca. 1633**



**Lastman  
Hippo-  
crates  
visiting  
Democri-  
tus,  
1633**



- **Vincent, Democritus among the Abderitans, (1795) among the people gathered around Democritus there is one who, with his gesture, is meaning Democritus' insanity**



**J. -B. Corot, Démocrite et les  
Abdéritains (1841)**