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ACTIVITY IN MARX'S PHILOSOPHY by Norman D. Livergood, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1967. (This is the book that contains Marx's doctoral thesis.)

I'll begin with the Appendix which contains Marx's doctoral thesis. I want to stress that some of the Notes for his PhD do not appear in the actual Thesis; however, the very fact that the Foreword both quotes Hume and reiterates no less than 3 times in the last 3 paras. the fact that Prometheus is the greatest of all in the philosophic calendar, shows that KM has reality in mind.

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Also, the very 1st sentence of the beginning ( I. The Subject of the Treatise ) : "What should not occur in a good tragedy seems to happen to Greek ~~philosophy~~ philosophy: a weak ending." (p. 63) -- and in that same introductory note, the word "history" permeates everything, including even philosophy.

However, it sticks much closer to the details of the actual philosophies of Epicurus and Democritus than do the notes for it, with the result that the only ~~reference~~ reference to Hegel is as a good pupil, i.e. that Hegel was so great he couldn't go into detail on what he, Marx, is doing but in fact, he departs entirely from Hegel's conclusions, and recreates Hegel's dialectics.

Part I then was the Subject and the judgements of others, as well as the difficulties (lots of history of Egypt, Persia -- the Chaldeans in Persia -- and even Ethiopia).

Part II is on the differences between the two philosophies, on physics in detail, being very much enamoured of the fact (p. 81) : "Epicurus feels in an especially strong way the contradiction which resides in this theory." (p. 84). "Democritus, in contrast to Epicurus, transforms an act of blind necessity into a powerful motion, that which for Epicurus is a realization of the concept of the atom." (pp. 102)

"Epicurus, on the other hand, criticises those who believe that man needs the heavens, and Atlas, himself, upon whom the heavens are supported, he finds to possess human stupidity as superstition. Stupidity and superstition are also Titans.

(p.108): (pp 108-109 complete the Thesis): " Thus it is not the belly doctrine of Arcestratus, as Chrysippus thinks, but the absolute character and freedom of self-consciousness, which is the principle element of Epicurean philosophy, even if self-consciousness is only conceived in the form of individuality."

"The historical proof of this can be found in Stoic philosophy. The abstract general self-consciousness as the urge to affirm itself in things in which it is only affirmed by denying them."

It's clear that KM considered Epicurus the greatest of Greek representatives of the Enlightenment, at which point he quotes Lucretius' praise of Epicurus: "Wherefore Religion is now in her turn cast down and trampled underfoot, whilst we by the victory are exalted high as heaven." (p. 109)

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The author of this thesis, Norman Livergood, ~~centers~~ centers everything in Marx around "the activist element in Marxian practice." The specific facet of the principle relates to Marx's philosophy -- the principle of activity being that concept which underlines the entire system." And Livergood then emphasizes that activity means in thought as well as in action. At the end of this introduction, Livergood quotes me (M&F), which gives a rather interesting twist to the word "early writing" by which I referred to 1844 but he's referring to the PhD. "In broad outline, what Marx expressed in the early writing is the essence of Marxism as it was to remain and develop through the remaining 39 years of his life."

Every one of his chapters is therefore on activity; Chapter 1 -- Activity and Materialism; Chapter 2 -- Activity and Knowledge; Chapter 3 -- Activity and Philosophy; and Chapter 4 -- Summary.

The thesis is "correct" but very abstract; however, I do find his stress on criticism, where it is even used synonymously with philosophy, is quite good, except that he then goes off on Dewey and Pragmatism in general. (p. 37) : "Criticism (philosophy) is an activity common to all experience. It is not a formal discipline of the classroom, or, as Dewey says, 'It is not a matter of formal treatises, published articles, or taking up important matters for consideration in a serious way'. Criticism takes place whenever value is pondered, questioned, or estimated."

The author quoted me also on p. 3, from M&F again, p. 42, on Marx not rejecting idealism, and on the same page says: "In Epicurus Marx discovered an idea capable of transforming materialism into a complete system of thought -- a system able to explain change in non-mechanistic terms. Epicurus' concept of the declination of atoms was the beginning of the idea of an internal principle of motion within reality. But the thought was not fully developed -- always remained a foreshadowing. It was in Hegel that this Notion burst into full expression."

Activity in thought  
 & in action

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