

Philodemus On Piety

Post by "Don" of December 20, 2020 at 11:12 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Yes I think we are together. I can easily see the Epicureans criticizing attitudes that are excessively or improperly "virtue hating" and "all-harassing" while still agreeing with the criticism of Socrates, since the Epicureans considered Socrates to have been very defective in his teaching and therefore probably worthy of the ridicule he received.

I'm still not sure we're together. Philodemus is describing the comedy playwrights themselves as hating virtue and harassing everybody. Philodemus's tone "momentarily rises in vehemence" (as Obbink notes). The Epicureans are in no way taking a share in this description. Philodemus is disgusted with the comedy writers (whether in reality or just to make a point isn't clear). In some ways Philodemus is equating the political persecution of philosophers and intellectuals with their derision in comedy.

Obbink notes the Epicureans didn't escape completely unscathed by the comic playwrights.

"Epicureans" appear in Hellenistic comedy stereotyped as μάγειροι "the cooks in charge of preparation of private sacrifices" and satirized as pandering to delicacies and fancy tastes.

Obbink notes that there is no clear evidence or instances of "Epicureans" being satirized for their theological views "but rather their attitude towards sacrifice and religious feasting (in the context of Epicurus's stereotyped doctrine of pleasure)."

Obbink notes that Philodemus is claiming that "Epicurus *never* fell prey to comic derision," and Philodemus doesn't "retreat" from that position. "Yet he could have safely argued that comic portrayals never led in Epicurus's case to exile/execution, as he, like many others, believed about Socrates."