

Toward A Better Understanding of Epicurean Justice And Injustice (With Examples of "Just" and "Unjust")

Post by "Cassius" of March 25, 2021 at 5:10 PM

Gosh I somehow missed seeing Bryan's cite in his text -- sorry! Might as well paste that here, keeping in mind that Plutarch was not disposed to characterize the Epicureans in a kindly way:

Quote

No sufficient praise therefore or equivalent to their deserts can be given those who, for the restraining of such bestial passions, have set down laws, established policy and government of state, instituted magistrates and ordained good and wholesome laws. But who are they that utterly confound and abolish this? Are they not those who withdraw themselves and their followers from all part in the government? Are they not those who say that the garland of tranquillity and a reposed life are far more valuable than all the kingdoms and principalities in the world? Are they not those who declare that reigning and being a king is a mistaking the path and straying from the right way of felicity? And they write in express terms: 'We are to treat how a man may best keep and preserve the end of Nature, and how he may from the very beginning avoid entering of his own free will and voluntarily upon offices of magistracy, and government over the people.' And yet again, these other words are theirs: 'There is no need at all that a man should tire out his mind and body to preserve the Greeks, and to obtain from them a crown of wisdom; but to eat and drink well, O Timocrates, without prejudicing, but rather pleasing the flesh.' And yet in the constitution of laws and policy, which Colotes so much praises, the first and most important article is the belief and persuasion of the Gods. Wherefore also Lycurgus heretofore sanctified the Lacedaemonians, Numa the Romans, the ancient Ion the Athenians, and Deucalion universally all the Greeks, through prayers, oaths, oracles, and omens, rendering them devout and affectionate to the Gods by means of hopes and fears at once. And if you will take the pains to travel through the world, you may find towns and cities without walls, without letters, without kings, without houses, without wealth, without money, without theatres and places of exercise; but there was never seen nor shall be seen by man any city without temples and Gods, or without making use of prayers, oaths, divinations, and sacrifices for the obtaining of blessings and benefits, and the averting of curses and calamities. Nay, I am of opinion, that a city might sooner be built without any ground to fix it on, than a commonweal be constituted altogether void of any religion and opinion of the Gods,—or being constituted, be preserved. But this, which is the foundation and ground of all laws, do these men, not going circularly about, nor secretly and by enigmatical speeches, but attacking it with the first of their most principal opinions, directly subvert and overthrow; and then afterwards, as if they were

haunted by the Furies, they come and confess that they have grievously offended in thus taking away the laws, and confounding the ordinances of justice and policy, that they may not be capable of pardon. For to err in opinion, though it be not the part of wise men, is at least human; but to impute to others the errors and offences they commit themselves, how can any one declare what it is, if he forbears to give it the name it deserves?