

Rarely read writer DeCasseres on Epicurus' great discovery

Post by "EricR" of February 27, 2022 at 8:01 AM

It has been forever since I posted something here. But when I came across this quote in a book I'm reading, I thought it might be appropriate to share it with you.

The book is called "Spinoza, Liberator of God and Man" by Benjamin DeCasseres (1873-1945). He was a writer in many forms, from editorial to poetry, and the author of many books and booklets. He is associated with the Egoist philosophical tradition. This is not the place to outline that tradition, but I can say that some of its writers point to Epicurus as among the first to work out a philosophy that placed the individual as "the measure of all things".

In the opening chapter of the book on Spinoza (an actual ancestor of DeCasseres), he outlines a brief history of philosophy up to Spinoza. He opens the first chapter with this fascinating concept,

"I conceive the Philosophic Mind as a being. Its adventures are epics. It is Ulysses, Don Quixote, Siegfried, Hamlet, Gulliver, Lucifer. Mind is man's only weapon against oblivion and destruction. Thought is war. Encased in a little skull, Mind, dowered with the power of infinite combinations, with its feet of reason and its wings of imagination, makes perpetual war on Mystery."

When it came to Epicurus he says,

"Trapped between the contradictions of Plato and Aristotle, Mind fell into the pits of self-mockery - the autumnal beauty of Skepticism and the winter of grim Stoicism... And Mind entered the skull of Epicurus, the Goethe of antiquity - "The meaning of Life is Life itself"..."

The mind of Epicurus had made a tremendous discovery, the greatest that had ever been made - that the will-to-live and the will-to-pleasure are one. Whatever lives, lives for egoistic gratification."

I really enjoy poetic writing like that. How can you resist a line like "the winter of grim Stoicism"?

Treating the Philosophic Mind as a single entity that enters the heads of different individuals is a great literary device that links them all to a single pursuit. And his idea that Epicurus' discovery was the greatest ever prompted me to share this with you.