

Venus: Conceiving The Good

Post by "Cassius" of February 26, 2019 at 3:10 PM

ἤθους ἐν τοῖς ἰαῖσι κέρως γέωργος, IV.21'

Heraclitus also sheds some light on the apparent origins of the cliché, for he makes it clear that Epicurus has been dubbed a "Phaeacian" not simply because Epicurus (as a Hellenistic philosopher who praised the virtues of pleasure) seemed to be vaguely similar to the Phaeacians (who were generally regarded as archetypal hedonists).⁸ Heraclitus reveals that the supposed connection is in fact more precise: there was an established tradition of reading Odysseus' professed appreciation of Phaeacian pleasures (Od. 9.5-11) as an Epicurean manifesto. Odysseus delivers his famous declaration, of course, at the Phaeacian banquet soon after his rescue by the princess Nausikaa. After years of war, and years of wandering through inhuman realms Odysseus declares:

οὐ γὰρ εἶμι γὰρ τί φημι τέλος χαριώτερον εἶναι
ἢ ὅτ' εὐφροσύνη μὲν ἔχη κατὰ δῆμον πάντα,
δοετομόνες δ' ἀνὰ δόμοι' ἀσοοῦζονται ἀοιδῶν
ἡμεῖσι ἐξείης, παρὰ δὲ πλῆθυσι τράπεζαι
εἶπου καὶ κρεῖων, μέθυ δ' ἐκ κρητῆρος ἀρύσσεν
οἰσυχὸς φορέτης καὶ ἔγχυθι δαπέσσιν·
τοσοῦτό μοι κάλλιστον ἐνὶ φρεσὶν εἴεται εἶναι.

Od. 9.5-11

I maintain there is no telos more pleasing than when good cheer fills all the people, and guests sitting side by side throughout the halls listen to the bard, and the tables are loaded with bread and meat, and a steward drawing wine from the bowl brings it round to fill our cups. To my mind this (telos) is something most beautiful.

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