

Gaius Cassius Longinus' Political Actions

Post by "Cassius" of February 1, 2024 at 8:10 PM

Under the influence of reading Cicero in years past, I used to be totally against Caesar and on Longinus' side and content to label Brutus and Longinus' actions as simply "general anti-dictator" and those of a "liberator," which they claimed to be.

I am not nearly so firm on that today. I still have the highest respect for Longinus and think he was sincerely trying to apply Epicurean philosophy as he understood it (and I do think he understood it well). However at this point I focus on that I just don't have enough information about the forces at work in the Roman Civil War to be sure which side I would personally agree with. It seems that some of Caesar's supporters and possibly Caesar himself had substantial Epicurean leanings, so I don't think we can say with confidence that all Epicureans were on Longinus' side.

There's usually at least two sides to every story, and my view today is that I personally don't have enough information to know whether Caesar was or could have been primarily a reformer of a rotten aristocracy, or whether he was truly a power-seeking totalitarian who was driven to be king and happy to overthrow the "Limited" government of the republic. He certainly knew enough to refuse the title of king up to the end, even though some of his supporters wanted to give it to him. That's not an entirely different situation than that of George Washington.

We don't want to turn this into a discussion of modern political assassinations, but I personally am definitely interested in learning whatever there is to be learned about more of the facts of the Roman civil war situation. I think that those historical details would help us better understand the rise and fall of the Epicurean movement in the Roman period.

The big question that generally gets raised is "Cassius couldn't have been a good Epicurean because a good Epicurean would never step forward so firmly into public life...." and that position I totally reject. So I think this would definitely be a useful discussion to learn more details about how Cassius might have viewed the situation. I suspect it was not simply an abstract "I love the Senate and the traditions of the Roman Republic" position, but I just don't know what other factors were involved.