

Observation About The Opening Of The Letter To Menoecus vs The Letters To Pythocles and Herodotus

Post by "Elli" of December 3, 2019 at 3:23 PM

It seems to be that the letters to Herodotus and Pythocles, were after their request, and maybe they were teachers in an epicurean school of philosophy that had been established by them in Lampsacus. So, the only need they had, was for a good summary of the works on Physics and celestial phenomena, by Epicurus. The letter to Meneoceus looks like to be addressed in a young man that Epicurus cared for him, as he also lived him behind in Lampsacus with the other friends.

Because who needs more wise exhortations on ethics : a young man or a middle-aged man that was also to Epicurus a very known friend, and for a long life period of time?

And imo here is the answer :

ES 17. It is not the young man who should be thought happy, but the old man who has lived a good life. For the young man at the height of his powers is unstable and meets up (on his way) many coincidentally opinions (i.e. empty beliefs), like a headlong stream. But the old man has come to anchor in old age as though in port, and the good things for which before he hardly hoped he has brought into safe harbor in his grateful recollections.

On the above saying, for caring for and supportive of youth as Epicurus may have been, he also recognized that the young are unstable in their beliefs (unlike, presumably, mature Epicureans), and are therefore dragged in all sorts of directions by the whims of chance or cunning persons. This sort of vacillation and instability, Epicurus implies, is not conducive to bliss and pleasure.

The old man, on the contrary, who has lived out his life well, is presented in a beautiful simile: he is like a sailor who has let down anchor in old age, as if in a safe harbor. He is to wander no more. Better yet, all those "goods" i.e. his experiences that made him also to be prudent and happy that once seemed to him hard to attain, he now guards safely in the repository of his own grateful memory of good times past.