

The Neglect of Metrodorus' Economics

Post by "Cassius" of February 16, 2020 at 5:02 PM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

Did Metrodorus contradict Epicurus if wealth is preferable to poverty?

I would say that there is no contradiction because I do not believe that Epicurus did say, or would say, that wealth is *always* preferable to poverty, nor is poverty *always* preferable to wealth. And I would expect that if we had more of the writings of Metrodorus and Philodemus we would see that they held the same view, because it is so obviously related to the individual circumstances of the person involved. We see that kind of thing over and over, for example in the advice to the young man whose sexual appetites were apparently too strong, while at the same time Epicurus said that he would not know the good except for experiences such as the pleasure of sex.

That's the clear meaning of [VS63](#). "Frugality too has a limit, and the man who disregards it is like him who errs through excess." which appears to be well documented, and is consistent with the underlying physics and so much of the rest of the philosophy. VS 23 can easily be read to be consistent with this by focusing on the contextual and non-absolute nature of the issue.

There are obviously times when more wealth is more conducive to happiness than poverty, and also some circumstances when less wealth is more conducive. Would anyone dispute that and suggest that there is a bright line that ALWAYS is the case? That's really the issue involved in much of the back and forth here. My position is that it is obvious that wealth and poverty are sliding scales that must be evaluated in context. That's the thrust as to every decision in life which is clearly established by the fundamentals of the philosophy.

So I would say that anyone who would contend that Metrodorus or Philodemus or any other reputable Epicurean ever deviated from that analysis would face a very high burden of showing from reliable and well-documented texts, in reasonable context, that showed such deviation. And if such texts exist, I have never seen them, despite my continuing efforts to keep aware as to new excerpts from Herculaneum.

Commentators to the contrary are generally observed, in my experience, to be using fragmentary texts, heavily reconstructed, and clearly are engaged in speculation, much as some people try to say the Lucretius' physics depart strongly from Epicurus, which arguments I have not found to be persuasive in any degree.