

Discussion Plan For Chapter 06 "The New Education" (Norman DeWitt's "Epicurus And His Philosophy")

Post by "Cassius" of April 19, 2018 at 11:02 PM

Norman DeWitt's "Epicurus And His Philosophy" - Chapter Six - The New Education

1. Summary Introduction:

1. Epicurus developed an integrated program for teaching the Canon, Physics, and Ethics
2. This program was implemented by graded (progressive) texts.
3. The program was designed to rival and replace the Platonic program of education.
 1. The Platonic program was: music, gymnastic, rhetoric, dialectic, mathematics (especially geometry).
4. The Epicurean objective was not to produce a good citizen (Plato's objective) but to produce a happy and contented man.
 1. Gymnastics/exercise was accepted as part of Epicurean program.
 2. Music would also be an accepted part of Epicurean program
 3. Likely hostile to poetry.
 4. Rhetoric denied a place in Epicurean curriculum
 5. Dialectic was rejected.
 6. Mathematics was rejected (?)

2. The Heavenly Apocalypse

1. Epicurus employed the analogy of being able to fly through the heavens to observe them from great height as a means of teaching how the details fit into the big picture and the big picture relates to the details. (Example in Lucretius Book 1)

3. The Tour of the Universe

1. The wise man not only ascends but explores the heavens - so the trip is not only up, but through so as to see the details and how the large scale map fits with the small scale map (the Big Epitome and the Little Epitomes)
2. This is a reference to the use of outlines to ensure that we can grasp not only the details but the fundamental principles.

4. The Use of the Epitomes

1. The brief summaries provide the most panoramic and commanding view of the truth, such as the letters to Menoecus, Pythocles, and Herodotus.
2. However they are not primers to be mastered and laid aside, but serve as syllabuses to be kept on hand as a summary map of the whole.
3. The Twelve Fundamental Principles of Nature are also an example of this.
4. The method is not from the particulars to first principles, but from first principles to particulars -- DEDUCTIVE, not INDUCTIVE reasoning.

5. This use of the Epitomes shows that Epicurus was not an "Empiricist" as that term is used today.
 6. The function of the sensations as part of the canon is to test the correctness of the inferences drawn from the Twelve Principles, but these principles were not themselves based on evidence of sensation - their truth was demonstrated by deductive syllogism.
5. The New Textbooks
1. Three classes of textbooks, all under the direction of the single organizing mind of Epicurus:
 1. Dogmatic
 1. Textbooks on the Canon, Physics, and Ethics mostly by Epicurus himself, such as the 37 books on Physics
 2. Included works on sensations, physical change, images, etc
 2. Refutative
 1. Series of attacks on other schools, especially the Platonists, such as "Against the Philosophers in Mytilene." Much use of satire.
 2. The purpose of these was to inoculate the minds of students against arguments from other schools.
 3. Lucian: "Well let us be of good cheer, my dear friend, we possess a powerful antidote for such poisonous influences in 'the truth and the philosophy that is invariably right.'"
 3. Memorial
 1. Eulogistic biographies of deceased members of the school.
 2. Secured a form of immortality for members of the school.