

Lucian As An Epicurean

Post by “Joshua” of December 16, 2020 at 7:38 PM

I need to get back to work on The Greek Anthology, as he has several epigrams in there.

The difficulty is that he made a name for himself as a satirist, and cleaving to one doctrine or philosophy does not position one well to write good satire. A satirist must float more nebulously. The moment he sets his foot on solid ground, he exposes himself to ridicule and charges of hypocrisy—in other words, to satire. He becomes an apologist, and ceases to be a satirist. Those who believe in the infallible truth of revelation and who attempt satire are for this reason unfailingly absurd.

A more Epicurean literary style at that time was the pastoral, as in Horace's *Epodes*, or in Virgil's *Eclogues*. Epic poetry was more generally a civic-minded affair, and in Virgil's case a more stoical one. The Lucretian synthesis of a cultural Epic with rich pastoral imagery and strongly individualistic philosophy is a factor in the success of his poem.

Consider how differently we would look on Shakespeare if he only wrote tragedies. Lucian may well have been an Epicurean through and through, but it would have done him no favors in his satires.