

Hercules the Epicurean (?)

Post by "Cassius" of May 5, 2018 at 6:08 AM

I am continuing to think about this and how it relates to the "low achievement" mentality that some people seem to want to take as Epicurus' message. Certainly in my mind the work of Epicurus and Lucretius were not in any sense "easy" - they were monumental achievements that were pleasurable to a certain extent while undertaken, but also involved tremendous work. What about the effort someone like you (a referenced to HD) put into your book, for another example? It is a travesty to turn Epicurus into a promoter of "the easy life" when in fact it is the goal of pleasure as the reward of all sorts of effort that is the goal. Just like Xenophon records in this passage, if the example of Hercules shows great reward from great effort, as opposed to doing what he did explicitly for no reward other than "virtue" itself, then I don't see why ancient Epicureans would not have embraced Hercules as part of the Hellenistic mythology that they would have endorsed - as part of the public festivals Epicurus endorsed.

Anyway, the point being that it would be very helpful to purge from modern Epicurean discussion the idea that Epicurus was a slacker who preached that the rewards of "indolence" are exactly the same as the rewards of pleasures that require hard work to obtain. And this not only from the practical viewpoint that indolence rarely brings sustained successful living in this world, but from observing that the pleasures that come from climbing the mountain to see the view on top are not achievable any other way.

All pleasure may be desirable, because it is pleasure, but does that observation mean that all pleasure is EQUALLY desirable? I don't think that is the correct conclusion. And this would not be because of some outside standard of virtue that some pleasures are more "noble" than others, but as simple as observing that some pleasures are more long-lasting, or intense, than others, under our individual circumstances.