

Episode One Hundred Three - Corollaries to the Doctrines - Part Three

Post by "Joshua" of January 2, 2022 at 12:28 PM

There is also that strange passage in the Hippocratic Oath enjoining its reader not to cut those who "labour beneath the stone". This is generally interpreted as being a kidney stone (which, incidentally, Epicurus suffered from).

Apparently Hippocrates felt that kidney stones were the domain of *surgeons*, not of the *physicians* he was instructing. It is possible that Hippocrates really was as high-minded as all of that, but to my juvenile ear upon first hearing or reading those words, the "stone" seemed in context more like a punishment from the gods which it was forbidden to treat. And further, that there was something effeminate in dying of this "labor".

It is indeed curious the emphasis (or sometimes invention) which the biographers have placed upon the death of philosophers--often written as if they had 'gotten their due'.

So it was that Empedocles (who thought he was a god) died by leaping into a volcano; Socrates, the wisest man (in his own estimation), in all of Greece, died by his own hand; Archimedes was slain by a blunt instrument of the Roman soldiery while himself distracted by the higher mathematics; Lucretius was offed after he quaffed, allegedly, a love potion; Zeno the Stoic died of holding his breathe to suppress the pain of a broken toe; Julius Caesar suffered epilepsy and, in spite of controlling the Roman empire could not control even his own body (much less the governing body of the Senate); Protagoras had held that 'man was the measure of all things', but found by experience that he did not measure up against the sea in storm (he died of shipwreck). And on it goes.