

"Epicurean Mission and Membership" - Very Interesting Article by MacGilivray On Ancient Epicurean Missionary Spirit

Post by "Cassius" of May 8, 2022 at 11:24 AM

Yes, as you read through the rest of the article he expands on this point with lots of details. To be clear, MacGilivray does NOT believe that Epicureans were essentially Hermits who put up walls around themselves and lived isolated from the rest of the world.

The thrust of the article is to the opposite point: That while Epicurus was very clear that not every person or group or people will become our friends, those who are "well-disposed" towards us should be invited to at least some of our gatherings (the 20th is explicitly mentioned) and that we engage in discussion and question and answer with them, even with those who we are sure will never want to spend the time to read all the 37 books and pursue all the details.

That's one of the the really interesting parts of the essay -- the use of outlines like the letters to Herodotus and Pythocles and the 40 doctrines: are they summaries for use of new people? are they abbreviations for use in memorization by the inner circle? are they in any sense "dumbing down" the doctrines to make it easier to spread the word?

So a lot of the essay is directed toward the question of how dedicated Epicureans should act towards those who are not (yet) dedicated Epicureans, and that touches on a lot of what we do with EpicureanFriends.com and our other initiatives.

MacGilivray makes the kind of comments we are now accustomed to (calling DeWitt out when he goes too far with his Christianity analogies) while at the same time affirming DeWitt's basic point -- that the Epicureans were not at all hermits, and that it was an important part of the Epicurean model to work to expand the philosophy to others.