

Kungi's Natural and Necessary Discussion

Post by "Cassius" of July 25, 2022 at 1:01 AM

This is the quote from A Few Days In Athens That I cited Wednesday night and which I think applies to this discussion:

Quote

'Tell us not that that is right which admits of evil construction; that that is virtue which leaves an open gate to vice.' This is the thrust which Zeno now makes at Epicurus; and did it hit, I grant it were a mortal one. From the flavour, we pronounce of the fruit; from the beauty and the fragrance, of the flower; and in a system of morals, or of philosophy, or of whatever else, what tends to produce good we pronounce to be good, what to produce evil, we pronounce to be evil.

The natural and necessary analysis is being used by OKeefe and others across the Internet to argue that the best Epicurean is the one who most limits his desires to only those which are "natural and necessary." Has Epicurus thrown open the gate to the construction of his philosophy that the best life is the one in which the desires are limited only to those which are natural and necessary? If so, we can quibble about the meanings of natural and necessary all day long, but Epicurus himself has not spelled those meanings out in the letter to Menoecus, and he could not have failed to anticipate that his words would be interpreted by some to imply that he who limits his desires the most (to only the most basic natural and necessary functions of life) lives the best.

So our current situation is that just such an inference is the leading (in numerical terms) interpretation of Epicurus today. Is it correct? If so we should embrace it clearly, if not, like Lucretius said in another context, we should gird ourselves to battle to fight it and strike it down. Because like it or not this is the defining idea of Epicurus in the minds of many a academic authorities, and someone is very wrong about a very key interpretation.