

Post-Philippi Troubles in The Ancient Epicurean World

Post by “Joshua” of December 15, 2022 at 7:03 PM

[This](#) is John Dryden giving some of his opinion on the matter. I'll pull out a few excerpts;

Quote

[Juvenal] treats tyranny, and all the vices attending it, as they deserve, with the utmost rigour; and consequently a noble soul is better pleased with a zealous vindicator of Roman liberty [i.e. Juvenal] than with a temporising poet, a well-mannered court slave, and a man who is often afraid of laughing in the right place [i.e. Horace]—who is ever decent, because he is naturally servile.

After all, Horace had the disadvantage of the times in which he lived; they were better for the man, but worse for the satirist. It is generally said that those enormous vices which were practised under the reign of Domitian were unknown in the time of Augustus Cæsar; that therefore Juvenal had a larger field than Horace. Little follies were out of doors when oppression was to be scourged instead of avarice; it was no longer time to turn into ridicule the false opinions of philosophers when the Roman liberty was to be asserted. There was more need of a Brutus in Domitian's days to redeem or mend, than of a Horace, if he had then been living, to laugh at a fly-catcher.

Quote

Herein, then, it is that [Aulus Persius Flaccus, a Stoic] has excelled both Juvenal and Horace. He sticks to his own philosophy; he shifts not sides, like Horace (who is sometimes an Epicurean, sometimes a Stoic, sometimes an Eclectic, as his present humour leads him), nor declaims, like Juvenal, against vices more like an orator than a philosopher. Persius is everywhere the same—true to the dogmas of his master. What he has learnt, he teaches vehemently; and what he teaches, that he practises himself.

Quote

Fame is in itself a real good, if we may believe Cicero, who was perhaps too fond of it; but even fame, as Virgil tells us, acquires strength by going forward. Let Epicurus give indolency as an attribute to his gods, and place in it the happiness of the blest: the Divinity which we worship has given us not only a precept against it [indolence], but His own example to the contrary [In the life of Christ].

Quote

We who are better taught by our religion, yet own every wonderful accident which befalls us for the best, to be brought to pass by some special providence of Almighty God, and by the care of guardian angels; and from hence I might infer that no heroic poem can be writ on the Epicurean principles, which I could easily demonstrate if there were need to prove it or I had leisure.