

# (Mis)Quoting Epicurus--An Analysis of Language in Epictetus

Post by "Don" of January 27, 2023 at 6:03 AM

Nice work, Joshua! I found this to maybe provide even more context.

Quote from Usener w translation via Attalus website

[ U523 ]

Lactantius, Divine Institutes, III.17.42: [Epicurus maintains that] pleasure is the greatest good; there is no human society – each one takes thought for himself. {Cf. U581}

Cf. Cicero, Letters to Atticus, VII.2.4: ...Carneades {spoke} with more wisdom than our philosophers Lucius and Patron, who in sticking to selfish hedonism and denying altruism, and saying that man must be virtuous for fear of the consequences of vice and not because virtue is an end in itself, fail to see that they are describing a manner not of goodness but of craftiness.

Arrian, Diatribes of Epictetus, II.20.6: So too Epicurus, when he wishes to abolish the natural fellowship of men with one another, makes use of the very thing he is destroying. For what does he say? "Don't be deceived, men, or misled or mistaken: there is no natural fellowship of rational beings with each other. Believe me: those who say otherwise are deceiving you and reasoning falsely."

Ibid., II.20.20: So with Epicurus: he cut off everything that characterizes a man, the head of a household, a citizen, and a friend, but he did not succeed in cutting off the desires of human beings; for that he could not do.

<http://www.attalus.org/translate/epicurus3.html>

Usener. *Epicurea*. 1887. p.318

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Usener includes that as a quote of Epicurus in U523, but also includes several others in U523 as context. So, Arrian could easily be paraphrasing for his own purposes or even pulling out of context for his own purposes.

On this very topic, I agree with Dr. Austin when she talks and writes about Epicurus and the community of Epicureans relying on each other. Epicurus took guardianship of children, made arrangements for dowries, allowed people to name their children after him, made arrangements for people to live in his house and garden after he died, and so on. That doesn't

sound like someone who was vehemently opposed to "fellowship of rational beings."

It seems that Arrian, via Epictetus, is setting up a diatribe against Epicurus and so is more than willing to do what it takes to make his point.