

Paper On Epicurean Engagement With Society - Jeffrey Fish - "Not All Politicians Are Sisyphus"

Post by "Cassius" of March 6, 2023 at 10:54 PM

There is a lot of discussion in this article about Philodemus' "On The Good King" but I do not recall that we have discussed it here much in the past.

We need to find the best available translations / reconstructions of what is left and start a thread on that under Ethics:

Although there is an understanding that the just ruler will reign over a prospering and peaceful kingdom, Philodemus' focus is the well-being and happiness of the ruler.⁶¹ In a quotation already known to earlier editors, through the just and pious king a land is said to flourish for him, and its people are said to prosper (*Od.* 19.113–14). Of crucial importance to Philodemus, Homer affirms that there is *enjoyment* in living and ruling justly. Such a view of virtue is entirely foreign to Stoicism, a point overlooked in previous attempts to view the treatise through that lens.⁶⁶ It would also have proven unappealing to Peripatetics or Platonists.⁶⁷ Although Cicero stresses the importance and utility of a good reputation in his letter to his brother Quintus on how to best govern a province,⁶⁸ he is committed to viewing the happiness of a ruler and the happiness of his people as essentially two separate things. The goal of happiness for those governed will often mean the unhappiness of the virtuous ruler, a false dichotomy for Philodemus.⁶⁹ By exploring how a ruler, through his virtue, creates as safe and stable a rule as possible, Philodemus' treatise also presents the inverse of what we find in the discussion of politics by his contemporary and fellow Epicurean,