

What if Kyriai Doxai was NOT a list?

Post by “Don” of July 26, 2023 at 10:15 PM

I wondered whether Lucian's text gave an idea if "Accepted Maxims" description would give us an idea of whether it was in discrete, listed items (like we have now) or more summary or epitome.

Lucian's text reads:

εὐρῶν γὰρ τὰς Ἐπικούρου κυρίας δόξας, τὸ κάλλιστον, ὡς οἴσθα, τῶν βιβλίων καὶ κεφαλαιώδη περιέχον τῆς τάνδρὸς σοφίας τὰ δόγματα,...

- τὰς Ἐπικούρου κυρίας δόξας = Epicurus's "Accepted Maxims" (as the translation goes)
- τὸ κάλλιστον, ὡς οἴσθα, τῶν βιβλίων = the greatest, the most noble, the most beautiful, etc. of books (κάλλιστον is the superlative of καλός "beautiful, noble, etc."). Lucian doesn't seem to say "of 'his' (i.e., Epicurus's) books" but just seems to say "of books", as in all books.
- καὶ κεφαλαιώδη περιέχον τῆς τάνδρὸς σοφίας τὰ δόγματα "and a summary that encompasses the doctrines of The Man's wisdom"
 - [κεφαλαιώδη](#) This is the key word which means the principal or capital but also summary.
 - [Arist.Rh.1415b8](#) uses it: there is no need of an exordium, except just to make a summary statement of the subject, so that, like a body, it may have a head.
 - [Arist. Metaph.988a18](#) uses it: We have given only a concise and summary account of those thinkers who have expressed views about the causes 988a.20and reality, and of their doctrines.

I see nothing to suggest Lucian saw it as a list per se but just a summary text. Just to be clear, I'm not maintaining that Kyriai Doxai read beginning to end like a treatise. It was obviously a summary. However, we do a great disservice to the text by seeing the "maxims" as discrete entities. My goal is to connect what needs to be connected, to let stand alone what needs or is intended to stand alone. My primary position is that the numbered list has corrupted our understanding of the text that, according to Lucian, is the most noble of books.