

August 2, 2023 - Wednesday Night Zoom Agenda - Vatican Sayings 16 & 17

Post by “Don” of August 4, 2023 at 3:53 AM

does allow for some important subtleties.⁸⁷ Clay acknowledges that the collection of *Kyriai Doxai* (or *Master Thoughts*, as he calls them) may have been somewhat shorter originally, and he demonstrates how some of the sayings were altered by the process of oral transmission during the centuries after Epicurus. He also acknowledges that the *Letter to Menoeceus* may have been the source for some of the *Kyriai Doxai* and that some of the “prehistory” of the sayings can be found in Epicurus’ *On Nature*.⁸⁸ In general he affirms, however, that the sayings we find in the text of Diogenes Laertius represent a book that was published by Epicurus.⁸⁹ He emphasizes the occurrence in the title of the word *kyriai*, which is shown to mean “crucial.” He also emphasizes the fact that in antiquity the *Kyriai Doxai* were considered to be the authoritative sayings of Epicurus.⁹⁰

The issue ought to have been settled a century ago, when Diogenes’ inscription and the *Voice of Epicurus* were discovered. The *Voice of Epicurus* (Ἐπικούρου Προσφώνησις, also known as the *Sententiae Vaticanae*) is yet another collection of Epicurean aphorisms that was found in a manuscript in the Vatican. Both Diogenes of Oenoanda and the Vatican text preserve some of the Epicurean sayings (with variations) that appear in Diogenes Laertius, along with many previously unknown sayings. When the *Kyriai Doxai* of Diogenes Laertius are compared with the *doxai* of Diogenes of Oenoanda and the *Voice of Epicurus*, it becomes apparent that the three texts represent three rather different sets of *Kyriai Doxai*. It is impossible to say which of these three versions bears the closest resemblance to the text that Alexander sent up in flames (whether the burning took place in history or only in fiction).

The Vatican manuscript contains eighty aphorisms. The first two are equivalent to the first two maxims recorded by Laertius.⁹¹ *Kyria Doxa* 3 is not preserved in it at all, and after *Kyriai Doxai* 4 and 5 (*Sententiae Vaticanae* 3 and 5) are recorded with minor changes (usually in word order), the texts diverge.

Principal Doctrines 2 and 17. Long comments: “As these passages show, Epicurus was quite capable of writing in a pithy, aphoristic style, and there can be little doubt that such statements were intended for learning by heart” (“Epicurus and Philodemus,” 628).

87. *Lucretius and Epicurus*, 72–81. His argument has met with approval; see the review by

Only thirteen of Diogenes Laertius' *Kyriai Doxai* appear among the eighty *Sententiae Vaticanae*, and except for the first four just mentioned, they do not appear in the familiar order.⁹²

The text of the *Kyriai Doxai* inscribed by Diogenes of Oenoanda is in very poor condition, but the fragments of thirteen of his maxims have been identified with thirteen of the maxims in Laertius' text. Ironically, this poor state of preservation at Oenoanda is due largely to the high status accorded to the *doxai* by Diogenes. Because the maxims were originally displayed in large letters in one continuous line, a single maxim could extend across several stones. When the stoa was dismantled contiguous stones became separated, and for this reason the *doxai* are in worse condition than the rest of the passages, which were inscribed in narrow columns. Several years ago it was claimed that the fragments of the *Kyriai Doxai* in Oenoanda could help us calculate the original length of the whole inscription. Since the sayings were written in one unbroken line across its length, one could simply count the number of letters in Epicurus' *doxai* (i.e., in the version recorded by Diogenes Laertius) and multiply that by the number of centimeters each letter would require.⁹³ Such a method will not work: the recognizable maxims among the Oenoanda *doxai* are only roughly equivalent to Laertius' text, and the remains of most of them are so exiguous that exact correspondence cannot be argued with certainty.⁹⁴ Furthermore, one of the maxims of Diogenes of Oenoanda corresponds not to a text quoted by Laertius but to one of the *Sententiae Vaticanae*; and eight of Diogenes' maxims are not known from any other source.⁹⁵

In the case of one maxim preserved by Diogenes, scholars of Epicurus and Diogenes seem to agree that Diogenes of Oenoanda preserves a text superior to

175 ff. The manuscript is dated to the fourteenth century and also contains some Xenophon, Marcus Aurelius, and Epictetus.

92. In the Vatican manuscript, saying 1 = *Kyria Doxa* 1, 2 = *KD* 2, 3 = *KD* 4, 5 = *KD* 5, 6 = *KD* 35, 8 = *KD* 15, 12 = *KD* 17, 13 = *KD* 27, 20 = *KD* 29, 22 = *KD* 19, 49 = *KD* 12, 50 = *KD* 8, and 72 = *KD* 13.

93. See Chilton, *Diogenes of Oenoanda*, xlv; Smith, *Thirteen New Fragments of Diogenes of Oenoanda*, Denkschriften der österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 117 (Vienna, 1974), 48; and Smith, "Fifty-Five New Fragments of Diogenes of

94. See Chilton, *Diogenes of Oenoanda*, xlv; Smith, *Thirteen New Fragments of Diogenes of Oenoanda*, Denkschriften der österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 117 (Vienna, 1974), 48; and Smith, "Fifty-Five New Fragments of Diogenes of

that of Diogenes Laertius.⁹⁶ The maxim concerned is a version of *Kyria Doxa* 5, which is preserved in the fifteenth line of fragment 37. In the text preserved by Laertius (which appears also in the *Sententiae Vaticanae*),⁹⁷ Epicurus says: “It is not possible to live pleasantly without living prudently and honorably and justly” [Οὐκ ἔστιν ἡδέως ζῆν ἄνευ τοῦ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως].⁹⁸ Following that statement, Laertius’ text adds the phrase “without (living) pleasantly” [ἄνευ τοῦ ἡδέως]. That last phrase is obviously missing something, and it was recognized long ago that Cicero’s translation of the maxim provides the missing phrase: “non posse iucunde vivi, nisi sapienter, honeste, iusteque vivatur, nec sapienter, honeste, iuste, nisi iucunde.”⁹⁹ In the seventeenth century Gassendi saw that if one translated Cicero’s version into Greek, one could add the reciprocal qualification (as stated in Cicero’s last six words) to Laertius’ text, so that the conclusion to the maxim would read: “nor is it possible to live prudently and honorably and justly without living pleasantly”¹⁰⁰ [οὐδὲ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως ἄνευ τοῦ ἡδέως].

Diogenes of Oenoanda’s text of the maxim, discovered more than two hundred years after Gassendi pointed to Cicero, has nine words intact: “. . . and honorably and justly, nor prudently and honorably and (justly) . . .” [[. . .]ως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως, οὐδὲ φρονίμως καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικα[. . .]].¹⁰¹ This fits Cicero’s translation extremely well, and Diogenes’ version is now used to supplement the text preserved by Laertius. Thus, Diogenes of Oenoanda preserves a version of the fifth maxim that contains the essential statement known also by Cicero, but which is missing from both Laertius’ text and the manuscript of the *Sententiae Vaticanae*.

The variations among the three collections of Epicurus’ sayings are precisely what we would expect to find if the *Kyriai Doxai* were an organic, expandable collection of Epicurean wisdom that was sometimes transmitted orally. The three extant collections must represent three different stages in development; no doubt there were other collections. The collection of *doxai* known by Lucretius probably represents yet another one. Lucretius seems to translate four *doxai*

known from Diogenes Laertius, but only two of them correspond to the first four that Philodemus called the *tetrapharmakos*, and the other two are rather differ-

