

Julie Giovacchini - "The Tetrpharmakos, Authentic Formula Or Simplistic Summary Of Epicurean Ethics?"

Post by "Cassius" of August 4, 2023 at 2:33 PM

This one is useful too, in analogizing the question under discussion to what Lucretius alludes to with bees flitting from flower to flower:

Quote

The image of the bee foraging in the flowers would, according to Barns, be a transparent allusion to the composition of anthologies⁴⁹. If we compare this verse to the famous Lucretian comparison of poetry with honey, used as an adjuvant to make the bitterness and brutality of the epicurean remedy assimilable⁵⁰, we have here an interesting analogy which, in the whole of the *Rerum Natura*, would work at different levels:

- a first level, therapeutic: the pharmacy epicurean, which is already a complex substance coming from different elements, must be mixed with something other than itself (the honey of poetry which dilutes it) to be properly assimilated and treat immediately;

- a second level, which could be called pharmaceutical: the honey itself is the product of foraging or picking from a

collection of philosophical elements, the sentences, maxims and aphorisms attributed to Epicurus, whose intrinsic virtue makes as many pharmacy, available and usable independently of their initial discursive context from the moment they are inserted into a new discourse that presents them effectively, integrating them into a more complete whole.

There is also an interesting comparison of this issue to a passage that Seneca wrote to Lucilius:

Quote

You wish me to accompany these letters also, like the preceding ones, with a few sentences from our masters. But they were not preoccupied with flowerets: the whole assemblage <of their thought> is virile. Inequality, you know, is found where

remarkable realities dominate. There is nothing admirable in a single tree, if the whole forest rises to the same height. These kinds of sayings, you will find them in poems, in stories. That is why I do not want you to judge that these belong to Epicurus; they come back to everyone, much more, they come back to us. But we notice them more with him, because they arise at rare moments, because we do not expect them, because it is surprising that such strong things should be pronounced by a man who teaches softness. This is indeed how many consider him. To me, Epicurus is a brave fellow, but he wears a lady's shirt. [...]

However, if you insist, I won't be stingy, but I'll have my hands full: immense is the mass of these sentences which lies pell-mell, and which must be amassed and not picked. They do not fall one by one, they flow. They are eternal and mixed together. I have no doubt, they would bring a lot to a still clumsy and ignorant listener. Because it is easier to retain concise and poetically ordered elements. That is why we give children to learn maxims, and what the Greeks call chries, because their childish mind can understand them, and is not able to embrace more. But it is shameful for an accomplished man to gather flowers, to rely on very well-known words and in very few numbers, and to stick to their memory: now that he is resting on himself! Let him speak in his name, instead of quotations.