

Outline for book "Raising Children in the Epicurean Philosophy"

Post by "Joshua" of June 6, 2019 at 10:58 PM

Quote

I read an anti-polis / anti-state, somewhat anarchic message into this, that must have repercussions in a philosophy education.

Hiram offers an interesting and subtle bit of textual criticism here, and I think it's worth exploring.

It's a famously difficult maxim for several reasons. It is removed from its context; it doesn't adequately define or explore either of the two options presented; and, most curiously, it doesn't even make it obvious which of the two is preferable! This last challenge invites the reader to infer from it almost anything they like. I could, for example, infer and defend any of the following if I considered only this text in isolation:

1.) The student will know the difference between studying philosophy for herself and studying philosophy for all of Greece, and will choose to study for herself.

Or, 2.) The student will know the difference between studying philosophy for herself and studying philosophy for all of Greece, and will choose to study for all of Greece.

Or, 3.) The student will know the difference between studying philosophy for herself and studying philosophy for all of Greece, but won't decide between them. Perhaps employing a bit of game theory, she'll choose to study philosophy for herself *for* all of Greece!

When I first encountered it, it didn't even occur to me that there *were* multiple possible interpretations. "Well," I thought, "of course the Epicurean will study philosophy for herself. The point of philosophy is to cure the dis-ease of the soul." And despite the obvious example of Epicurus himself (who in a sense did study philosophy for Greece--see Lucretius' paeon in Book 1), I still favor this reading; itself an indirect indictment of the nauseating proto-totalitarianism of the Platonic philosopher-king.