

Epicurus vs the Cyreniacs

Post by "Cassius" of July 20, 2019 at 10:01 AM

If there is enough interest in the Cyreniacs we may open a new section of the forum devoted only to them, but for now let's talk about them under "Hedonism."

I've just read the following article by David Sedley entitled "[Diogenes of Oenoanda on Cyreniac Hedonism](#)."

(33 III 7) [...] is able, as these people lay it down, like a bait, for all human beings, to draw them, like birds or fish, open-mouthed to the names of the virtues, and sometimes (33 IV 1) <LACUNA OF THREE LINES> [illusions (?). And are you] not ashamed, [you] wretched people, [of contradicting yourselves and] one another: [for indeed, employing puerile] wit, [you reject] pleasure, while cleverly agreeing [with us about sensation], so that you are not [prevented from] passing through [an area in safety] when you venture to climb crags.

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believes,

(33 V 2) Well now, I want to deflect also the error which, along with the feeling of self-love, has you in its grip – an error which, more than any other, further inflates your doctrine as ignorant. The error is this: [not] all causes in things precede their effects, even if the majority do, but some of them precede their effects, others [coincide with] them, and others follow them.⁴

(33 VI 4) Examples of causes that precede are cautery and surgery saving life: in these cases extreme pain must be borne, and it is after this that pleasure quickly follows.

(33 VI 11) Examples of coincident causes are [solid] and liquid nourishment and, in addition to these, [sexual acts]: we do not eat [food] and experience pleasure afterwards, nor do we drink [wine] and experience pleasure afterwards, nor do we emit semen and experience pleasure afterwards; rather the action brings about these pleasures for us immediately, [without awaiting] the future.

(33 VII 11) [As for causes that follow, an example is expecting to win] praise after death: although men experience pleasure now because there will be a favourable memory of them after they have gone, nevertheless the cause of the pleasure occurs later.

(33 VIII 7) Now you, being unable to mark off these distinctions, and being unaware that the virtues have a place among the causes that coincide with their effects (for they are borne along with [pleasure]), go completely astray].

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This is an excellent article and affirms the hazards in textual reconstruction from mutilated original texts.