

Observation About The Opening Of The Letter To Menoeceus vs The Letters To Pythocles and Herodotus

Post by "Cassius" of December 2, 2019 at 5:53 AM

Observation: Both the letter to Pythocles and the letter to Herodotus start out with a specific detailed greeting explaining the purpose of the letter and saying that these people are being provided a summary of a part of Epicurus' philosophy.

The letter to Menoeceus, in contrast, does not start the same way. It does not identify the reason that prompted the letter, state the purpose of the letter, or refer to it being a summary of the principles of ethics.

The second paragraph does imply that what follows is in explanation of the things Epicurus "used unceasingly to commend to you..." but this is after an introductory paragraph that seems to be floating out of context. Is something missing, or was there something about the rationale

EPICURUS TO MENOECEUS

self ("that I used to commend **to you**"), that

LET no one when young delay to study philosophy, nor when he is old grow weary of his study. For no one can come too early or too late to secure the health of his soul. And the man who says that the age for philosophy has either not yet come or has gone by is like the man who says that the age for happiness is not yet come to him, or has passed away. Wherefore both when young and old a man must study philosophy, that as he grows old he may be young in blessings through the grateful recollection of what has been, and that in youth he may be old as well, since he will know no fear of what is to come. We must then meditate on the things that make our happiness, seeing that when that is with us we have all, but when it is absent we do all to win it.

The things which I used unceasingly to commend to you, these do and practice, considering them to be the first principles of the good life. First of all believe that

This is in contrast to the letter to Herodotus:

EPICURUS TO HERODOTUS

For those who are unable, Herodotus, to work in detail through all that I have written about nature, or to peruse the larger books which I have composed, I have already prepared at sufficient length an epitome of the whole system, that they may keep adequately in mind at least the most general principles in each department, in order that as occasion arises they may be able to assist themselves on the most important points, in so far as they undertake the study of nature. But those also who have made considerable progress in the survey of the main principles ought to bear in mind the scheme of the whole system set forth in its essentials. For we have frequent need of the general view, but not so often of the detailed exposition. Indeed it is necessary to go back on the main principles, and constantly to fix in one's memory enough to give one the most essential comprehension of the truth. And in fact the accurate knowledge of details will be fully discovered, if the general principles in the various departments are thoroughly grasped and borne in mind, for even in the case of one fully initiated the most essential feature in all accurate knowledge is the capacity to make a rapid use of observation and mental apprehension, and (this can be done if everything) is summed up in elementary principles and formulae. For it is not possible for any one to

And the letter to Pythocles in particular mentions this context, and even refers to the letter to Herodotus - but does not refer to the letter to Menoecus:

EPICURUS TO PYTHOCLES

CLEON brought me a letter from you in which you continue to express a kindly feeling towards me, which is a just return for my interest in you, and you attempt with some success to recall the arguments which lead to a life of blessedness. You ask me to send you a brief argument about the phenomena of the sky in a short sketch, that you may easily recall it to mind. For you say that what I have written in my other works is hard to remember, even though, as you state, you constantly have them in your hands. I was glad to receive your request and felt constrained to answer it by pleasant expectations for the future. Therefore, as I have finished all my other writings I now intend to accomplish your request, feeling that these arguments will be of value to many other persons as well, and especially to those who have but recently tasted the genuine inquiry into nature, and also to those who are involved too deeply in the business of some regular occupation. Therefore lay good hold on it, keep it in mind, and go through it all keenly, together with the rest which I sent in the small epitome to Herodotus.