

Article on the "Letter to Marcella" by Porphyry

Post by "Cassius" of January 31, 2020 at 2:45 PM

Weren't we talking recently somewhere about someone recently interested in this letter to Marcella? I still to this day have not spent much time with it, but it seems to me very dangerous to consider this an Epicurean work as it seems to have lots of unEpicurean thought mixed into it.

It would take almost a line-by-line analysis to go through it but I see this as an example which appears to me directly UNEpicurean, because if the gods have decided to give up food and sex for themselves, then the implication is that we should consider doing so in emulation, which I cannot believe that Epicurus would suggest as a model for humans. But is not this letter suggesting that humans should?

So then, just as those who have a fever are always thirsty because of the serious nature of their disease and eagerly desire what is most detrimental, so also those who have the soul which manages it in distress are always in need of everything and fall prey to fickle desires under the influence of their excessive greed." 28. Consequently, even the gods have prescribed remaining pure by abstinence from food and sex. This leads those who are pursuing piety toward Nature's intent, which the gods themselves constituted, as though any excess, by being contrary to Nature's intent, is defiled and deadly. "For the ordinary man who fears the simple way of life is driven by fear into actions which are most likely to produce it. And many who have become wealthy have not found relief from evils but rather an exchange for greater ones." Therefore,

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On the other this might seem to be an Epicurean quote at first glance, but is the "if it does not purge the PASSION OF THE SOUL" really well stated. That could be a translation issue, and if the meaning is "Disturbance" then all well and good, but if the meaning is "strong desire" then that sounds very Stoic to me.

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philosophy causes every disturbing and painful desire to subside. Empty is the

I don't have more time for this right now but I would not consider this letter to be safe Epicurean teaching without a lot more study and possible clarification.