

The Neglect of Metrodorus' Economics

Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2020 at 6:36 PM

I have a copy of that but I have only scanned it. I think there is or would be a TREMENDOUS amount of interest in anything reliably handed down by Philodemus, but not when

(1) the Academic world keeps the material under wraps and makes it impossible to study freely by anyone, and

(2) what is left is so fragmentary that the narrative is largely a matter of speculative reconstruction so that you don't really know whether to trust the rendering or not.

For example this is what I see as to what you just quoted. The parts in brackets are reconstructed, but what about the rest of the text? What does the piece of paper or papyri that bears these characters look like? Is this a penciled version made by those who unrolled the text 100+ years ago? How do we know that they deciphered the texts correctly? As far as being instructed to write outlines, we know that Epicurus says that in the letter to Herodotus. But these words "to hand down a tradition" are in brackets - what is the basis for this reconstruction? Sounds reasonable, but how do we know?:

COLUMN XXVIII 20
κην εἶναι πρὸς τῶν ἀγαθῶν (π)αρ[α-
δόσεις καὶ πολλὰ κατὰ [μέρος]¹
διαζόδο[ις πρὸς ἐπι-
μέλειαν καὶ φυλάκην (χρη)μῆ-
ται, καὶ [μ]ὲν [στ' ἐ]ν τῇ [παρ]
πλούτου καὶ πενίας καὶ τῇ
πε[ρ]ὶ θε[σι]τῆς πολυτε[λοῦς]
τε καὶ λι[ι]τῆς καὶ τῇ περὶ
αἰρέσεων καὶ φυγῶν κἄν εἴ
τινὲς εἴσιν ἄλλαι τοιαῦτα.]ται.

COLUMN XXVIII

it is, nevertheless, necessary [to hand down a tradition] of the most **general principles** and to outline [many details]⁸⁰ in the treatises [concerning] the care and preservation of possessions, and [chiefly in] the treatise on wealth and poverty, the one on the luxurious and the frugal ways of life, the one on things to be chosen and to be avoided, and in any other treatises of this sort.

So as far as I can tell the best way to change and expand the level of discussion would be to find a way to bridge the gap between what we have free access to and the original sources.

In writing this I mean no criticism whatsoever to anyone, Hiram or Voula Tsouna. All I am saying is that reliance on heavily reconstructed texts is perilous without a clear chain documenting the evidence at every stage. And maybe equally importantly, having it only be the available only at significant cost makes the work much that harder.

Perhaps these texts are in fact available somewhere on one of the public websites, but tracking down that chain is a large part of the work that needs to be done.