

The Neglect of Metrodorus' Economics

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXJEooUCrHQ>

I've translated an excerpt from a work by George Kaplanis "on wealth", and when in 2014 the participation at the symposium of Athens was by some genuine epicureans, and before the raid of the Aristotelian-Stoic academic-professors.

<<...Philodemus teaches the methodology of analysis (the Canon). The second field of epicurean philosophy is the field of Ethics. This work that I will present to you is a part of my initial work which includes both fields. I've presented this initial work at the Thessaloniki's Garden. We present all of our works for the Symposium in the Garden and we're discussing them. And as my friend Panagiotis (Papavassiliou) said : we all together (as a team) wrote them (the works). Thus, the joy of the Symposium, for us from Thessaloniki, begins one and a half months before the Symposium and if we add the discussion/criticism to the works which are another month, that is, the whole story about the Symposium lasts two and a half months.

Anyway, to not make a long story short "on wealth". There are various questions that our friends ask us in everyday life. The katastematic pleasure (with astonishment and irony) does it make us indifferent to wealth? Once we have the katastematic pleasure what else do we want?

The Epicurean philosophy, as we are told, as an "ascetic" philosophy is not hostile to wealth? That is, not only to be indifferent but also to be hostile to wealth. How could someone that deals with something noble as the philosophy is, to deal with the wealth that is something completely banal? That is, engaging in wealth does not kill the spirituality? What is the viewpoint of the epicurean philosophy on wealth?

Here I will make an observation that some religious moralists, for example, the Christians or their descendants who belong to any ideology, but let's speak about Christians now, as they have a clear view on wealth. That is why people also ask us for our opinion. Because the opinion of Christians is clear, it is written in their sacred texts such as: "whoever has wealth will not enter the kingdom of heaven". So Christians and wealth are unrelated things (laughs). Let us the epicureans also say, like them, some blunt words. Philodemus says this: The philosopher must be interested in wealth (laughs). To be concerned with wealth or as Epicurus himself says (κτῆσεως προνοήσασθαι και του μέλλοντος) that is to say to take care for your properties and provide for the future. Maybe someone is still wondering since Epicurus can be happy only with bread and water, so why do you want wealth? I would personally say that poverty is not the cause of happiness. That is, it is not needed when we seek happiness to go for living in a poor neighborhood.

There is also the view of cynics who say: We limit our needs, we limit our desires so we do not have to worry too much and be bothered in our lives. And we live a tranquil and peaceful life. Of course, Metrodorus, here, in his work on wealth does not accept this and he strongly disagrees. No, he says, this life is not in harmony, this life of cynics i.e. to limit your desires and needs is not harmoniously regulated. A harmonious life is harmonious when it does not predetermine now that there will be later a need to beg and rent ourselves in order to survive. In the ancient era to go and working as an employee it was like a curse.

And while the cynics let the frugality to fall uncontrollably downward, Socrates defines this frugality precisely with an amount, saying that five minas are enough to satisfy the natural and necessary of our lives. We need nothing more than 5 minas. Someone that knows he told me, that the ancient amount of 5 minas is about 500 euros of today. In any case, it is a small stable amount, which you will have as a stable income throughout your life. And you will spend with this stable small income all your life... and you'll be pleased too. Personally, in such a life I would drink the hemlock (laughs).

Of course, I think that this image of the cynics and Socrates that are telling you to sit steady there all your life is a very static image. It is too static for it to be sustained by Epicurean philosophy which is structured to deal with a flowing and constantly changing reality>>.