

PD10 - Commentary on KD 10

Post by "Cassius" of March 17, 2020 at 10:28 PM

Ha - you probably won't be surprised to hear me say that I do read that differently. This may again arise from my DeWitt perspective, given that he drummed into me that so much of Epicurean doctrine is a direct refutation of Platonic doctrines, even / especially so many of the 12 fundamentals of physics, but also the [Principal Doctrines](#).

So I agree with this "The epitomes were written for Epicureans by Epicureans.." but I would say that in so doing "The [Principal Doctrines](#) were... made to refute their [the non-Epicureans'] ignorant philosophies."

I think that is most clear in the arrangement of the primary doctrines:

1 - A direct attack on supernatural religion, providing that antidote by which it is defeated.

2 - A direct attack on fear of death (again a segment of religion), providing the antidote by which it is defeated/

3&4 - A direct attack on Plato's assertion in [Philebus](#) that pleasure cannot be the guide of life, showing the key to rejecting the argument that Plato had made in [Philebus](#) that pleasure cannot be satisfied.

5 - A direct attack on "virtue" as the goal by providing the antidote to show that virtue means nothing unless it is linked to pleasure as the goal.

and then many of the rest, including ten, simply being more specific applications of attacks on the doctrines of non-Epicurean schools.

Because see, I do not think that Epicurus could afford to focus on "otherwise we could end up with more pain than pleasure in our life." In teaching new generations of students to reject the prior consensus, Epicurus could not count on their agreement that "more pleasure than pain" was a legitimate goal. Many (most?) held that the goal was wisdom, or virtue, or serving god, and Epicurus could not simply state a goal of "more pleasure than pain" without justifying that pleasure was in fact the goal.

Maybe I have too romantic an attachment to the Epicurean school, but I cannot believe that Epicurus could choose for himself, or appeal to others to pursue, pleasure as the goal, unless he was FIRST absolutely convinced that pleasure WAS the best and highest goal of the good life. He could NEVER leap to the practical discussion of pursuing pleasure unless he had first dismissed and demolished the contenders for the crown of "best life" -- because if he had not done so - if he had accepted any argument from the other schools of their superiority - then due to his respect for himself, for his students, and for nature, he would have himself led the

way in arguing that other goal.

So I do not see Epicurus' work as a "reminder" of anything, but a battering-ram (or a CANNON, in Amrinder Singh's analogy 😊) aimed directly at the competing schools, or to use another analogy, a vaccine intended to heal the errors and then inoculate those previously muddled minds that came to Epicurus from other schools.

As to your last comment about the order of the doctrines, I have seen it observed (but can't remember where) that there is no reason to believe that the original format was divided into 40 doctrines, so that in original form the Doctrines read more as a narrative than as a list, such that the topical divisions are not nearly so sharp as the modern numbering might indicate. I think that is backed up by their being no evidence in Cicero or other ancient writer's referring to them as being of particular number.

(If you can bear with me til you have time to read more into DeWitt, I don't think you will then have any problem understanding why I make some of the arguments that I do. You may not agree, but you'll see that most of my arguments are not original to me!)