

Eusebius

Post by “Don” of January 18, 2022 at 9:43 AM

[Eusebius of Caesarea: Praeparatio Evangelica \(Preparation for the Gospel\). Tr. E.H. Gifford \(1903\) -- Book 14](#)

This is a link to Eusebius's *Preparation for the Gospel*, Book XIV, which has extensive commentary on Epicurus and his school.

I recommend doing a "Find in page" search for epicur find all the mentions of Epicurus and Epicurean(s).

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2022 at 10:03 AM

Thanks Don. I remember reading into Eusebius many years ago when I was still researching the origins of Christianity, but I was not tuned in to Epicurus at the time. I look forward to your comments on this.

Post by “Don” of January 23, 2022 at 5:10 PM

[Eusebius of Caesarea: Praeparatio Evangelica \(Preparation for the Gospel\). Tr. E.H. Gifford \(1903\) -- Book 14](#)

Just going through chapter XXI here and this caught my eye:

Quote from Aristocles via Eusebius

some say that as the principle and criterion of choosing and avoiding we have pleasure and pain: at least the Epicureans now still say something of this kind: it is necessary therefore to consider these points also.

[Aristocles](#) is writing in the 1st c CE; Eusebius is quoting him in the late 3rd/early 4th c CE. I know I just recently did a timeline, but it never ceases to amaze me (and serve as a reality

check) that Epicurus's philosophy was still seen as enough of a threat to the Christians in the early 300s CE that he needed to be refuted. Epicurus died in 270 BCE, over 500 years before Eusebius. And yet, Eusebius still saw him as a threat. Way to go, master-builder of human happiness!

Here are some other thoughts from the chapter:

Quote

it is reason that tells whether it is to be chosen or avoided.

Aristocles/Eusebius seems to think this is a "gotcha." Epicurus himself says practical wisdom (phronēsis) is a tool for making wise decisions... To guide one to a more pleasurable life. It's not phronēsis for phronēsis's sake.

Quote

For although they maintain that every pleasure is a good and every pain an evil, nevertheless they do not say that we ought always to choose the former and avoid the latter, for they are measured by quantity and not by quality.

I'm not sure what the argument is here if quantity vs quality. However, given some other discussions we've had on the forum, I thought making note of this may be valuable.

Quote

'While the senses are like the toils and nets and other hunting implements of this kind, the mind and the reason are like the hounds that track and pursue the prey. Better philosophers, however, than even these we must consider those to be who neither make use of their senses at random, nor associate their feelings in the discernment of truth. Else it would be a monstrous thing for beings endowed with man's nature to forsake the most divine judgement of the mind and entrust themselves to irrational pleasures and pains.'

This seems to be Aristocles/Eusebius main argument against the horror of using the feelings of pleasure and pain for anything.

If I continue reading, I'll post some more excerpts and thoughts to this thread.

Post by "Cassius" of January 23, 2022 at 5:43 PM

Quote

that we ought always to choose the former and avoid the latter, for they are measured by quantity and not by quality.

That would seem to be either an error in the text or maybe different meanings of the word "quality." Is it "quality" in the senses of "properties of atoms v qualities of combined bodies," or "quality" in the sense of "purity" or maybe even "intensity?"

If the point is the weighing of the quantity of pleasure vs the quantity of pain, that would make more sense, but I would argue even that isn't correct unless we're getting really abstract and saying that all pleasure is the same and all we have to do is add it up in terms of quantity (of time perhaps?) -- But I don't think Epicurus taught that simplistic a view of pleasure. All pleasure is desirable, because it is pleasing, but that doesn't mean that all pleasures are identical.

I agree that this doesn't sound correct.

Quote

Else it would be a monstrous thing for beings endowed with man's nature to forsake the most divine judgement of the mind and entrust themselves to irrational pleasures and pains.'

Yes, Christians and most of the rest of the world think that Epicureans are monsters. Or that Epicurus was an Antichrist even. This is why we can't get too complacent and think that "everyone wants to be happy" means the same thing to everyone.

Post by "Don" of January 23, 2022 at 5:45 PM

Chapter XXVI

LOL..

Quote

'For how many and of what sort were the atoms which the father of Epicurus poured forth from himself, when he was begetting Epicurus? And when deposited in his

mother's womb, how did they coalesce, and take shape, and form, and motion, and growth? And how did that small drop, after calling together the atoms of Epicurus in abundance, make some of them into skin and flesh for a covering, and how was it raised erect by others turned into bone, and by others bound together with a contexture of sinews?

'And how did it adapt the many other limbs, and organs, and entrails, and instruments of sense, some within and some without, by which the body was quickened into life? For among these no idle nor useless part was added, no, not even the meanest, neither hair, nor nails, but all contribute, some to the benefit of the constitution, and others to the beauty of the appearance.

'For Providence is careful not only of usefulness, but also of beauty. For while the hair of the head is a protection and a covering for all, the beard is a comely ornament for the philosopher. The nature also of the whole human body Providence composed of parts, all of which were necessary, and invested all the members with their mutual connexion, and measured out from the whole their due supply.

Okay, that is *not* why I have a beard. 😄

Also...Evidently, Eusebius not think much of human biology's role in human reproduction and development. egads... God did it!

Post by “Don” of January 23, 2022 at 5:47 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

That would seem to be either an error in the text or maybe different meanings of the word "quality." Is it "quality" in the senses of "properties of atoms v qualities of combined bodies," or "quality" in the sense of "purity" or maybe even "intensity?"

Good questions. Maybe a look at the original text. I haven't seen that yet. If I dig it up, I'll explore.

Post by “Joshua” of February 7, 2022 at 12:50 AM

I thought I remembered you reading Eusebius, Don! A passage of his came up in the podcast recording this morning, perhaps you'll have some insight on that.