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Epicurus in Lycia P. Gordon: *Epicurus in Lycia: the Second-century World of Diogenes of Oenoanda*. Pp. 140. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996. £29.95/\$37.50. ISBN: 0-472-10461-6.

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The Classical Review / Volume 48 / Issue 01 / April 1998, pp 89 - 90
DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00330530, Published online: 09 March 2010

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00330530

How to cite this article:

R. W. Sharples (1998). The Classical Review,48, pp 89-90 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00330530

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EPICURUS IN LYCIA

P. GORDON: *Epicurus in Lycia: the Second-century World of Diogenes of Oenoanda*. Pp. 140. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996. £29.95/\$37.50. ISBN: 0-472-10461-6.

Diogenes of Oenoanda's Epicurean inscription has usually been discussed as evidence for the doctrines of the founder of the school. G.'s aim is rather to place it in its second-century A.D. context, relating it to the archaizing culture characteristic of the 'second Sophistic', while insisting that Diogenes does not share all the values of that culture and is adapting a distinctively Epicurean message to the circumstances and the modes of discourse of his own time. For example, G. argues (p. 108), criticism of oracles (fr. 23 Smith) was particularly pertinent in Diogenes' time, by contrast with that of Epicurus himself or of Lucretius; she well compares Lucian's portrayal of Epicurean hostility to the false prophet Alexander of Abonuteichos.

The *Letter to Mother* in Diogenes' inscription is, G. argues, not Epicurus' own, but a deliberate attempt, whether by Diogenes himself or by a predecessor, to defend Epicurus by displaying his filial loyalty, and to reinterpret in terms of Epicurean tranquillity a dream of, perhaps, death-like stillness. (p. 121. The analogy between Epicurean tranquillity and death might be regarded as double-edged; cf. Martha Nussbaum's argument, in *The Therapy of Desire* [Princeton, 1994], pp. 225–38, that Epicureanism seeks divine tranquillity by rejecting what is distinctive in human life.) The suggestion that Epicurus' mother might turn from rhetoric to philosophy, G. claims (p. 89), suits the social rôle of women in Diogenes' period rather than in Epicurus' own. There is a general need, G. argues (pp. 78–81), for ancient pseudepigraphical letters to be studied in terms of stock themes (here, the philosopher's refusal of wealth), and with reference to the *motive* for the forgery in each case (pp. 78–81).

G. is right to question the orthodox portrayal of Epicureanism as unchanging and doctrinaire, and to point to passages in Cicero which indicate disagreements among Epicureans by his own time. She argues that Diogenes Laertius (whom I shall henceforth, following G., refer to as 'Laertius', and Diogenes of Oenoanda as 'Diogenes'), a probable near-contemporary of the Oenoandan, may himself give us a picture of Epicureanism that is selective and suits his own preoccupations, saying (p. 51) 'His selection of Epicurean texts was . . . far from random; his sympathies led him to choose only those texts which would (according to his own tastes) present Epicurus in a favourable light.' Since this immediately follows a reference to Laertius' 'allowing Epicurus to speak for himself', it seems natural to interpret it as suggesting not just that different positions were adopted during the whole history of the school, but that there were different tendencies—or rather, points which taken in isolation might be interpreted as suggesting different tendencies—in Epicurus' own writings, and that Laertius' treatment is selective among these. This may well be true; it is not, for instance, Laertius who gives us the statements about the primacy of bodily pleasure in

Long and Sedley 21L–N (not that these are in fact inconsistent with what Laertius *does* give us, provided both are rightly understood).

However, Laertius, unlike Diogenes, does give us not only an account of Epicurean doctrines, but also extensive original Epicurean texts. This does not indeed affect G.'s claim that Laertius' treatment as a whole may be selective; but the uninformed reader of her p. 53 might not immediately guess that the first and third of the *Letters* which Laertius quotes occupy fifty-three sections, against only fourteen for his own surveys of Epicurean doctrines. The fact that Laertius does not say from what source he got the letters (*ibid.*) does not affect their status as evidence, so long as we accept them as authentic; and G. does not show that there were more representative texts of similar length available to Diogenes (or his source) than there were to Laertius. G. is certainly right, however, to argue that the tradition of the *Principal Doctrines* was fluid and that neither the collection in Laertius, nor that in Diogenes' inscription, nor yet that in the *Vatican Sentences* can claim canonical status.

The Oenoanda inscription is a particularly lavish display of concern for the welfare of others, welfare to be achieved of course by their conversion to Epicureanism. G. argues (p. 98) that 'pity for erring humanity' was characteristic of the school. There is, however, a question, which G. does not pursue, how such pity can be justified on Epicurus' own principles, especially when Diogenes claims (*loc. cit.*) that future generations 'are ours even if not yet born'. (G. has 'mine', but Diogenes has referred to himself using the singular both just before, at fr. 3 col. IV.1 and 4, and just after, at col. V.12.) For when they are, we will not be. In the event, as G. observes (p. 125), 'Diogenes (does not) seem to have effected much of a change, if we take the dismantling of (his) stoa within a few generations of its construction as an indication of the local response'.

G.'s short book is not, and does not claim to be, a complete account of Diogenes' inscription. What it does is to elucidate particular features of Diogenes' approach, and so to contribute to our understanding not only of Epicureanism but also of the culture of the second century A.D.

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