

"Wise Man" Saying as to Rejoicing At the Misfortune of Another

Post by "Eikadistes" of June 29, 2021 at 4:56 PM

There's a consistent metaphor of harbors and storms at sea through Epicurean lore, inspired both by both Odysseus' shipwreck on the island of the Phaeacians and the later association of Epicurus with his own shipwreck, prior to establishing the Garden. Using this same metaphor, Lucretius explains how it can be pleasure to watch the *vast travails* of others:

Quote

"It's sweet, when winds blow wild on open seas,
to watch from land your neighbor's vast travail,
not that men's miseries bring us dear delight
but that to see what ills we're spared is sweet;
sweet, too, to watch the cruel contest of war
ranging the field when you need share no danger.
But nothing is sweeter than to dwell in peace
high in the well-walled temples of the wise,
whence looking down we may see other men
wavering, wandering, seeking a way of life
with wit against wit, line against noble line,
contending, striving, straining night and day,
to rise to the top of the heap, High Lord of Things.
O wretched minds of men, O poor blind hearts!"

(*De Rerum Natura* translated by Frank O. Copley, Book 2, Lines 1-14)

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I share a similar feeling with this analogy living in Florida with hurricanes. For me, the stormy skies are beautiful. The winds are still captivating. The exploding power transformers are

magical. Skipping work is a relief. Knowing that I don't have to fight with crowds in public is a blessing. I've always had the privilege of living beneath a safe roof on high ground.

Hurricanes mean something completely different to lonely seniors, or people living in mobile homes, or homeless members of our society, or people living within modest means near the seashore. To them, this event is an existential threat. It's not a joke, it's not a poetic metaphor, it's not something at which to smile. It's terrifying, tragic, and life-changing.

*I have **never** lived through a **non**-deadly hurricane.* Every hurricane for which I have been present has always lead to at least one drowning. While I was watching those trees dance in the wind, others were hiding on a floor while a tree fell through their roof. The juxtaposition between peoples' experiences based on their levels of security is staggering.

That juxtaposition also provides a learning opportunity. For every person that dies of disease, there was a case study that contributes to a future treatment. For every drowning during a hurricane, civil engineers design better and better structures, and people adopt safer and safer practices. It is always a pleasure to grow wiser and practice prudence.