

So, this is what we're up against...

Post by “Eikadistes” of August 12, 2021 at 5:10 PM

This immediately reminded me of something I came across in my research: an author's attempt to connect the dot of "Ram Dass" with the dot of "Epicurean Philosophy." I was nearly disturbed to have come across the following anecdote:

Quote

“Perhaps, like spiritual philosopher Ram Dass, a contemporary Epicurean would enjoin the truth-seeker to Be Here Now and Pay Attention.” (Mills, Epicurean Simplicity 22)

"Epicurean" has meant so many things to so many people, from the materialist piety of the ancient Greeks, to the hyper-political sensualists of Rome, to heretical medieval scholars, to Gassendi's "Christian Epicureans", to French libertines, and English atomists who overwhelmingly rejected the title of "Epicurean" to distance themselves from accusations of atheism. Here, author Stephanie Mills is using an American Vedantist, steeped in Indian Idealism, as a doorway to understand Epicurean ethics.

I do think that it is important to distinguish, as Cassius has pursued with commitment, "Epicureans" from "Neo-Epicureans" because there are **so many** heterodox interpretations that have obscured Epicurus' teachings. Gassendi saw Epicurus' atomist as being compatible with the revelation of Christ; the French libertines used "hedonism" as a justification for their lifestyle, but had little use for grounding their sense of morality in physics; the English materialists of the Reformation (who probably deserve the title of "Epicurean") did not want to associate themselves with *atheism*, which is antithetical to Epicurean philosophy, anyway.

We're up against 1,700 years of misinterpretation, largely (and *ironically*) attributed to self-alleged "Epicureans", themselves. As soon as we begin correlating Epicurean philosophy with the revelation of Christ, unrestrained pleasure-seeking, or, in this case, Ram Dass' interpretation of Hindu Vedanta, the teachings of Epicurus become an accessory to the modern ego.