

One way of Re-framing EP - expose the hidden context

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 9, 2022 at 2:06 PM

[Quote from Scott](#)

Pretty much everyone in this EF forum understands that EP gets a bad rap from mainstream culture, and has ever since Stoics and Christians and similar "transcendent value" ethics have held sway. An (abbreviated) version of the most common critical narrative goes something like this:

Epicureanism is about hedonism, which means they pursue pleasure instead of the (grander) {virtue/deity worship/other abstract/transcendent values/value systems}. Chasing after pleasures is shallow, unreliable and dangerous to oneself and society.

Challenging this narrative is difficult, at best. Arguing that going after pleasure as your final goal makes more sense than going after abstract transcendent values ("ATVs" lol 😊) as a final goal is an uphill battle. As Cassius said in the thread on Eusebius: "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."

I think there is two parts to "abstract transcendent values":

- 1) Religion and religious values -- worshipping, placating, petitioning a "creator God" which requires one to set aside one's own personal pleasure to ensure that "God is pleased"...and so that one can go to heaven after death).
- 2) Cultural values of "perfection" / "continual improvement" / "new/better innovations" -- these are threatened by the pursuit of pleasure...one's own pleasure must be set aside for these goals. For example, pursuing the perfection of a virtuoso violinist, a prima ballerina, or an olympic champion -- these take tremendous discipline and self-sacrifice. And within technology and medicine -- the goal of continually making improvements to make things better and safer, or to elieviate suffering of illness and prevent death...personal pleasure could be seen as getting the way of the kind of hard work required for innovation.

So Epicureanism will always be at odds with these.