

Episode One Hundred Forty-One - Proclaiming Epicurus To The World: Diogenes of Oinoanda (Part One)

Post by "Don" of September 27, 2022 at 6:24 AM

Thanks for sharing that, Godfrey. It sounds like you've found one way to get at making sound choices and rejections.

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Tranquility is a pleasant, potential byproduct of mindfulness but it's not the goal, it's not the process and, depending on the situation it's not always possible. But I'm finding that the practice can be useful for Epicurean living.

See, that's where using the word "tranquility" presents issues. I'd like to emphasize that using that word sets up several hurdles to overcome in really integrating ataraxia and aponia in one's life (to even better experience joy and other daily pleasures).

To me, Epicurus is calling us to be more "mindful" of - to be more aware of, to pay attention to - the pleasure that surrounds us every day all the time. As references, I'd cite:

**His reminder that "bread and water" can bring as much pleasure as a luxurious meal if we're hungry. Don't miss the pleasure of a simple basic everyday meal.

**To laugh and administer our household affairs at the same time as we expound our love and practice of wisdom.

**"Meditate day and night then on this and similar things by yourself as well as together with those like yourself. And never, neither awake nor in sleep, throw yourself into confusion, and you will live as a god among humans; because no person who lives among eternal pleasures is like a mortal being."

We miss SO many pleasurable experiences if we're distracted, anxious, worried, angry, selfish, friendless, dishonorable, unjust, etc. That's what being mindful means! Pay attention to what's happening to you and stop being distracted. The pathē - the "feelings" - are literally in the Greek "what is happening to you."

Mindfulness is NOT the *act* of meditating. Mindfulness can grow out of meditation (in various forms) but mindfulness (itself a loaded term these days) is also NOT something special, or something one sets time aside for. It is fully paying attention to our daily lives, to truly experience what is happening without being distracted. Meditation - including working to

memorize the [Principal Doctrines](#) or deeply studying a particular text or even reliving the details of a pleasant memory - is one way to strengthen that attention, but the *goal* is to carry that ability to pay attention throughout one's day and one's life. We are constantly distracted, tossed about on waves of anxiety, by planning for this or by regretting that or by instantly being angered by some perceived slight and wallowing in our self-righteous indignation. Calming *those* waves is what I interpret ataraxia and aponia to mean. There are studies that show mindfulness can help even with chronic pain management which gets at the aponia of that equation. That's the daily experience of "tranquility" - a pleasure in and of itself - I think that Epicurus is pointing his students toward. That's how we can rival the gods, by paying attention to the pleasure, the joyful experiences, that surround us in everyday life. We don't have to strive and struggle and work *for* pleasure. It surrounds us in our everyday experiences IF we just pay attention and calm the waves that toss our little boat around the sea.

(Note: I need to admit I'm only recently coming around to this perspective after thinking about Epicurus's philosophy these past several years, but it's the one that resonates with me. And I am NOT in any way shape or form a paragon or epitome of ataraxia, mindfulness, or anything else. But... I can see the value in it for trying to lead a more pleasurable life, so I'm going to try to integrate it into my life a little at a time.)

Edit: in thinking more about this this morning, I want to add that my understanding of mindfulness is that it is not passivity. It's not being a doormat and passively "taking what comes" in a fatalistic attitude. It's NOT Stoically accepting fate. If someone or something is going to harm you, it's being aware of the danger and acting skillfully to avoid or confront the danger. Not panicking, not "losing it." If something makes you angry, to be aware of the "sting" of anger but not to get carried away by it but to skillfully work with it and not get swept away in rage and do something you'll regret. All that, to me, equates with having a calm mind, allowing one to skillfully and wisely make choices of what to avoid and what to pursue.