

Promising New Book ("Living For Pleasure") and Great New Article ("Are The Modern Stoics Really Epicurean?") Both By Emily Austin

Post by "Cassius" of November 14, 2022 at 10:11 AM

I am very pleased to see that she cautions against superficial use of the Tetracharmakon and explains the need to get behind it to its root! I can't imagine that this book isn't going to zoom toward the top ranks of my "recommended for new readers" list. (My underline below)

Quote

Epicurus himself did not condense his practical philosophy into something so brief and chantable as "despair is a vice," but his followers wished he had, so they did it for him. Drawing upon, among other things, a passage from the *Letter to Menoeceus* and a smattering of [Principal Doctrines](#), they produced "The Fourfold Remedy" (the "tetrapharmakos").¹ From Philodemus:

God presents no fears, death no worries; the good is easy to get, the bad easy to endure.

Imagine that I had opened the book by telling you that Epicurus espoused these four claims, rather than putting them here, at the end. I assume that every reasonable person would likely dismiss one or more claim out of hand. The Classicist Fiona Hill, for example, writes that "the third remedy may provoke a cynical snort in any reader struggling to make ends meet, unless they have no dependents and are temperamentally ascetic."² And in some sense she's clearly right. Taken in isolation, the Fourfold Remedy serves at best as a promissory note for difficult arguments, an IOU for a hefty sum unlikely to be met.

By this point, though, I hope you feel like you have the tools to piece together Epicurus' reasons for supporting all four claims. Not that Epicurus thinks you need such arguments ready at hand as you traverse the rocky path of daily living or that you must feel prepared to triumph in an argumentative battle of skill, but it helps to have confidence that such arguments exist. Let's briefly recap, then, the general outlines of the Epicurean commitments that undergird the Fourfold Remedy, somewhat like the greater part of the iceberg that lies below the surface of the water.

Absolutely phenomenal:

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2740-promising-new-book-living-for-pleasure-and-great-new-article-are-the-modern-stoi/?postID=20594#post20594>

Quote

The Fourfold Remedy is the core of a much larger nexus of Epicureanism's philosophical commitments, the kind of complex nexus that undergirds any philosophy worth considering. We should never let anyone convince us of an overnight magic elixir, that a coin in our pocket with a catchphrase will make life manageable, that a quick fix will engender a fundamental life reorganization. Something like the Fourfold Remedy can only serve as a handy reminder of a deeper system of value and way of living that we fully inhabit and express.

True, you can remember distillations like the Fourfold Remedy in a way that you could never remember this chapter. It would prove fruitless, though, to chant it over and over in isolation of its argumentative context, and perhaps that is why the distillation does not come from Epicurus himself. Distillations are for people who already know the "why," and Epicurus was in the business of providing the "why." At this point, you know the "why," at least in broad outline and within the context of modern life. You have the tools to evaluate the project writ large as a system of value and decide for yourself.

Yet a philosophy is to be lived, not simply evaluated in the cold light of reason, or squabbled over among scholars in a stuffy hotel conference room. Epicurus does not think it is enough to merely chant the words, nor even to understand the arguments he uses to support his claims. We must also internalize and act on them.