

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

Post by "Todd" of December 19, 2022 at 3:46 PM

I'm not done reading it yet, but here are the things I want to say so far.

BTW, I think the book is outstanding, so my criticisms should be considered in that context

1) My biggest complaint: while I believe the author is making an honest effort to be non-political, I don't think she does a great job of it. Granted, it is a tall order nowadays to say meaningful things without offending someone. But it makes the book less useful as a tool for introducing people to Epicurus.

2) My next biggest complaint is that she seems to be putting words in Epicurus mouth at times. She'll say, "Epicurus believed X," and I'll think to myself, "Well, maybe, but that's new to me." Footnotes, or explanations would have been appreciated.

3) My favorite quote so far: "If you are always satisfied, then you do not die dissatisfied." This quote, and her chapter on desiring endless life made a lot of sense of to me, regarding why you shouldn't fear death. The previous arguments I'd heard always fell kind of flat.

4) Another thing that caught my attention...I'm paraphrasing here, and probably reading a bit more into it than what she actually said, but, "Unhappiness manifests in behavior, and thereby makes it possible to analyze objectively." This seems like an interesting way of getting from formal ethical principles to concrete advice for how to live. It was new to me, anyway.

5) I noticed some previous comments about her use of "extravagant desires". I also think that has too much of a negative connotation. I will note in her defense, that she says in a footnote that she had misgivings too. FWIW, inspired by her use of extravagant, I am using "luxurious desires" in my notes. You're welcome. 😊