

Questions for Emily Austin - "Living for Pleasure"

Zoom Meeting June 4

Post by "Kalosyni" of May 26, 2023 at 4:15 PM

Let's use this thread to accumulate questions for Emily Austin. Everyone can post their questions here in this thread, and then as we go along we will update this post with the best questions and use it as a guide at the meeting.

Questions for Dr. Emily Austin: We'll be coming from a slightly different vantage point compared to our previous interview on the Lucretius Today Podcast. We'd like to gear this interview for folks who have read the book and have a basic grasp of Epicurean philosophy. Your book has been out for some time now and also you have been interviewed a number of times. We can refer listeners to our earlier interview if they want to find more in depth info about your background and how you came to write the book, so this interview can jump right in to the philosophy.

List of Questions (to be updated)

1 - If you were writing the book over again today, would you change anything?

2 - Many people seem to have conflicting interpretations of what "ataraxia" or "tranquility" really mean. For some people tranquility is just a specific frame of mind, and for others it may be a specific list of actions that imply a very strict list of activities that a person will or will not do. Does pursuit of these goals mean there is specific list of do's and don'ts that everyone must follow? If not, how is the best way to get a firm grip on what pursuit of these goals means in real life?

3 - Epicurus seems to lay great emphasis on considering the condition of normal healthy living without pain be a state of pleasure. Do you see this observation - that the healthy activity of a living thing in a way that is natural to it is pleasure - as helpful to explaining to people why absence of pain does not imply "inaction" but indeed "healthy normal activity"?

4 - Related to that last question, can you tell us your thoughts on Torquatus' rejection of the "does your hand long for pleasure" argument from Chrysippus? Is this to be understood as making the same point made in the illustration that the host (who is not thirsty) pouring wine for his guest (who is thirsty) is in a similar state of pleasure to the guest who is drinking it? Can you explain these two illustrations? [Do these two examples illustrate that absence of pain is not a state of numbness but normal healthy pain-free action, and that the reason "absence of pain" is the greatest pleasure" is that an experience filled with pleasures cannot by definition

be "filled" any further?]

5 - Do you have thoughts on how to bridge the gap between people who like to "philosophize" and those who are more into "self-help" so as to make the discussion of Epicurus more relevant and understandable?

6 - Do you see dangers in the possible development of a "pop-culture Epicureanism" similar to the way that there seems to be a "pop Stoicism" that has abandoned the roots of what it originally meant to be a Stoic?

7 - Do you think that Epicureanism is enjoying a resurgence of interest, as a scholarly topic, especially among women - such as yourself, Catherine Wilson and Pamela Gordon? If so (in your opinion), why?

8 - Dr. Austin, I bought "The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia (Hackett Classics)" by Epicurus, Brad Inwood, Lloyd P. Gerson because you recommend it in your book. Can you say something about why you recommend this particular collection of primary sources?

9 - What other schools of philosophy are close to your heart? Which schools you find worth studying in detail?

10 - Do you have any plans for future writing on Epicurus?