

Creating a "Seven Steps to the Ethics of Epicurus"

Post by "Don" of September 3, 2023 at 6:51 PM

In looking at the PDs for some ideas, I took a clue from Cyril Bailey's summary of the PDs. He categorized them as:

1-4: The tetrapharmakos, the four-fold fundamental principles necessary for a tranquil life

5: The relation of pleasure to virtue

6, 7: Protection from external disturbances

8-10: The selection of pleasures

11-13: The ethical value of physical science

14-21: The wise man's life in relation to nature, his fellow men, and to true pleasure (can be sub-divided)

22-26: The tests and standards of moral (i.e., truly pleasant) action

27, 28: Friendship

29, 30: The classification of desires

31-38: Justice and injustice

39, 40: The wise man's life in the Epicurean community

Now there are many things about which I don't agree with Bailey, but this list is helpful as a starting point.

[PD01](#) and [PD02](#) are the ubiquitous correct understanding of the gods and death.

[PD05](#) gives the standard formula about living pleasurably entails living virtuously/ethically, and vice versa.

[PD08](#) to [PD10](#) talks about making the correct choices and rejections, the core of Epicurean day to day (moment to moment) practice. The practice seems to me to be brought up again in [PD20](#) through [PD26](#). Those are sections I need to investigate in my unending quest to re-compose *Principle Doctrines* as a text. [PD29](#) (necessary, unnecessary desires, etc.) and [PD30](#) are an important "how to do it" text as well.

[PD11](#) to [PD13](#) talk about the necessity of understanding "how things work" when it comes to allaying fears and superstitions about "astronomical phenomena and death and suffering,"

"myths," and "what is above and below the earth and in general about the infinite unknown." This conveys the importance of studying natural science and to understand how the physical, material universe works.

[PD14](#) and [PD15](#) talks about the fact that unlimited wealth isn't necessary to pursue a pleasurable life. Sufficient wealth is "limited and easy to acquire."

[PD17](#) is a good reminder: "One who acts aright (δίκαιος) is utterly steady and serene (ἀταρακτότατος), whereas one who goes astray is full of trouble and confusion."

[PD27](#) is our friendship one!

The Justice PDs are important from an ethical standpoint in that they say how people should treat each other, especially [PD31](#) "Natural justice is a covenant for mutual benefit, to not harm one another or be harmed."

[PD39](#) and 40 are not straightforward when trying to translate, but are potentially helpful.