

What Would Epicurus Say About Searching For "Meaning?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 12, 2024 at 1:00 PM

BTB I hope you will do more of the reading you indicated because I think you will get a lot out of it. However as you already indicate, the bottom line is that Epicurean philosophy is not consistent with radical skepticism, and someone who takes that position isn't ultimately going to be comfortable with Epicurus. That's very similar to how someone who is committed to radical hard determinism ultimately isn't going to be comfortable with Epicurus.

It's almost like clockwork and it's almost like we need a sign on the front page warning skeptics and determinists about the hazard. But we don't do that and probably won't because from the point of view I would expect Epicurus to take, people have a certain freedom of choice in determining their own futures, and they can change their minds even on skepticism and dogmatism. Even further, I would expect the ancient Epicureans to have said that a large part of the reason that radical skepticism and determinism is a problem is because those ideas aren't solely errors innocently arrived at, they are pushed as agendas by very influential parts of society with ulterior motives. Many people are "taken in" by them, innocently enough, because they have never had the opportunity to be exposed to a reasonable alternative like Epicurus provided.

So yes I realize that even though I am trying to write this considerately and compassionately, there are people who are going to take great offense to what I am writing here. They are committed to the view that no one can ever be "right" on anything, and that no one is responsible for anything because everything in the universe is just the current positioning of billiard-balls on the gaming table. And those people think that it's the greatest of offensiveness to suggest otherwise.

But if you're going to take Epicurean philosophy to heart and accept its foundations, that's just the way things are. You can't make everyone happy, and if you set out trying to do so you're on a fool's errand. Certain people are going to think you're the greatest thing since sliced bread, and others are going to think that you're talking like you just came down from the intermundia to deliver the wisdom of the gods.

Many of the questions you've raised BTB need to be the subject of FAQ entries, and so you've done us a favor by reminding us of how much work there is to do in explaining the Epicurean position.