

Pros and Cons Of Considering Epicurean Philosophy To Be A "Religion"

Post by "Peter Konstans" of February 1, 2024 at 2:08 PM

We should think in those terms: 'what can we do so that Epicureanism will survive our own demise and the demise of our descendants and the demise of the descendants of our descendants and so on and so on ad infinitum?' I think that calling Epicureanism a religion is a good strategy to get us there so I see Nate's attitude in a positive light. He is right to suggest that Epicurus took piety (and a certain sensual restraint I would add) seriously. In this respect he was as far removed from being a LaVeyan figure as he was from being a protestant preacher.

Plutarch tells us that Epicurus (against the counsel of most sages) saw nothing wrong with seeking sexual relations while being an old man and we can infer that he encouraged it. For all his ill-will I see no good reason not to accept this testimony by Plutarch as authentic. This alone tells us that Epicurus was not a traditional moralist which is an important point because traditional ideas of virtue propagated by most sages were closely linked with respect for popular religion.

That being said, I think Epicurus would have endorsed plenty of the Delphic Maxims. The problem with counterculture-type hedonism and individualism is that it attracts people who are not willing to work seriously and make sacrifices. If we allow Epicureanism to attract those types in large numbers we will perish in the long run. Epicurus, who had organizational talent, must have understood that personal moral quality matters. I would also suggest that we avoid people attracted to mysticism.

Calling Epicureanism a religion is not enough. It has to become an actual organization with rights and responsibilities; with a division of labor, duties and rewards. In other words a formal structure like the Garden is needed, headed by a 'gardener-in-chief' and his close associates. Once again, every precaution must be taken to deter anarchist types who just want to drink and have sex. Absent that, Epicureanism will not survive long. I suspect that a huge reason why ancient Epicureanism didn't survive to Late Antiquity is because it attracted more pleasure-consumers than pleasure-workers. Epicurus would have sacrificed his life for his friends. We need people that are capable of doing the same in a crisis.

That is still not enough. In my view it is important to become completely intolerant towards other religions and traditions. It is important to fight them and to mock them mercilessly and to never desist in doing so. History shows that political and religious traditions that allow or worse put a premium on tolerance do not survive long. Now this is my own personal view. The majority here probably disagree with me and that's fine.