

Epicureanism as the spiritual essence or 'religion' of an entire community

Post by "Cassius" of February 10, 2024 at 5:01 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

For me, reclaiming words such as "spiritual" is a valuable exercise.

[Quote from Bryan](#)

"which instead of ignoring or doubting it, I now think I see vividly.

Let me too try to engage on the precise issue, which I see as something like "describing the valid uses and meanings of the word 'spirituality'"

I see "spirituality" as validly describing a the experience of a very strong and clear feeling of respect and reverence and affection for something. I see it as validly describing an experience that at times is a strong feeling of respect and reverence is directed at other life forms, or at the stars or other "majestic" appearances of nature or other aspects of reality.

I see "spirituality" as invalidly used to describe an attitude of considering something as supernatural, or un-real, or wishfui thinking about things that do not exist.

A smell, for instance can trigger legitimate connections of memory with past good experiences or with particular people or places. Smells can also be used to induce reactions that are close to be psychotic.

A lot of this turns on the issue of whether the feeling being experienced heightens the senses and the thought processes in a realistic way toward greater effectiveness, or whether it deadens the senses and induces feelings of mechanical obedience and suppression of one's own mental activity in favor of some wished-for but not real un-real or un-worldly state of existence.

Experience of a deep and effective mental clarity and appreciation for the immensity of existence and the workings of nature, and of one's connectedness and appreciation for other living beings which enhances one's ability to participate in this universe is a very good thing, Experience of deadening and suspension of mental clarity and appreciation for reality for the purposes of inducing obedience and submission is a very bad thing.

I base all of this on the starting point that it is a core Epicurean perspective to see life as desirable and pleasure as "good," combined with the realization that life is short and for an

eternity before our birth we did not exist, and for an eternity after death we exist no more. Further, there is no wishful thinking 'supernatural' justification for our existence - our existence needs no justification more than the sun or the moon need. If one keeps those kinds of perspective in mind then you don't fall into nihilism and you develop close and emotionally strong ties to the things that are most important in sustaining your existence and happiness.

And among the most important things that help you in sustaining that happy life are those who have taught you and supported you in sustaining that experience, among whom it is legitimate to consider both historic leaders such as Epicurus, such real people as you yourself have come into contact, and such mental expectations of reality that you experience in at least mental form in your ability to visualize a beings who are able to sustain this kind of existence in perpetuity while overcoming any obstacles it may encounter.

(In that last case I wrote plural "beings" because there is good evidence to believe that it was a core observation that "nature never makes only a single thing of a kind," and thus it would not be expected that there is a single "god" but instead numberless "gods" throughout the eternal and infinite universe.)

If a person does not take steps to develop habits and regular activities to exercise the mind in these directions, it is too easy to fall prey to discouragement and nihilism, just like it is too easy to start imagining that there are supernatural gods if one looks up at the night sky but does not apply wisdom to start with "nothing comes from nothing" and to process in one's own mind the issues of beginnings and eternity and infinity. This is not dry "science" but the emotional appreciation of what it means to you as a person to be a part of this.

I would then project based on the above that Epicurus would have seen a proper "religion" as a set of institutions and habits and activities which reinforce the practical ability to keep strong one's experience of these perspectives.