

Epicurean Views On Hierarchy In Social Structures

Post by “Peter Konstans” of March 13, 2024 at 11:17 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

The master of this world will soon come after you and crucify you.

I believe that this poetic metaphor (and some of the other ideas in the above post) doesn't lead to finding good health and happiness of the soul. In fact it distracts from seeing the world "as it is". The best way to do that is start with your own life, and ask yourself: are you feeling more pleasure than pain? If not, why not? And what can you do to make your life more pleasant? And then remember that there will always be problems in the world, but if you say to yourself that you can't live a good life until all problems in the world are solved, then you will miss out on your one opportunity to experience what Nature endowed us with: the ability to experience pleasure. And we maximize it by using prudence, which also means that we "choose our fights" as some things just beyond our influence or our control. Don't miss out on making this one life as best as it can be - we only live once - and look for the goodness and pleasure that you can experience while you are yet alive. 😊

Thanks for your warm and well-meaning words but I should point out that I didn't write the above to express personal grievances of some sort. I just wanted to explain to the contributor to whom I replied certain aspects of my view of Epicureanism. You see, Epicureanism has an egalitarian ethos and a tendency to want to opt out of mainstream culture (traits that it shares with early Christianity and some egalitarian movements in the modern era) but it also shows little interest in fighting or provoking same mainstream culture. I think there was an Epicurean strategy of 'faked conformism' which explains why for example Epicurus and his followers continued to participate in religious rituals and pretended to be as pious as everyone else (I agree that they were not atheists in the modern Anglo-American sense but they were definitely far from traditional polytheists) or why the Epicureans never experimented with things like common ownership of wealth even though the acquisition of wealth and luxuries runs contrary to a marked preference for minimalism. To illustrate how strong the Epicurean tendency for minimalism was consider the cause of Epicurus' death. His kidney disease likely came about as a result of an extremely low-fat diet.

Unlike the Epicureans who were content to be just a philosophical community, the early Christians eventually created real egalitarian communities which sheltered to some degree their low-status members from the highly exploitative social conditions prevailing in the Roman

provinces. That's the main secret of their success in rapidly attracting new followers. They grew so numerous that you couldn't just kill them off anymore. So civilization developed a new strategy to defeat the Christian movement. It co-opted it and turned the Church into a formal state-sponsored organization. So ever since then the Christian Church assimilated itself in the realm of the Devil and became complicit in all sorts of depravities. Today the real early Christian ethos survives only within the last vestiges of monasticism and in fact we owe the preservation of ancient texts - including the traces of Epicurus - to those monks.

My personal life is not miserable and being resolutely apolitical I don't wait for the world to change to reach aponia and ataraxia. That said, no philosophy or religion - whatever we call it - can pay the bills or your social security or reduce working hours. Those are impediments that Epicurus didn't have to deal with and they have tangible effects that can't be prayed, meditated or philosophized away. I have no doubt however that if we lived in a society that was officially Epicurean these pressures would be somewhat gentler. Civilization generates numerous evils that can't be eliminated. But they can be helped. And that's where Epicurus 'the one who rushes to help' comes in.