

November 2024 General Thoughts On What Epicurean Philosophy Means To Me.

Post by "Cassius" of November 30, 2024 at 7:33 AM

My response to the Facebook post:

Good use of a chatbot! Of course I disagree with it, because it doesn't consider the nuances of the reason for the post or the subtlety of Epicurean philosophy, but it's helpful to draw out the issues.

It also systematically reveals the standard non-Epicurean perspective on Epicurus common among those who are primarily Stoic or Humanist or do not take the time to read the texts closely enough and take Epicurus seriously. Here are a few responses:

1 - Yes friendship is important, but friendship is not an end in itself. Friendship is desirable because it is among the most important tools to obtain pleasure. Friendship and community are subservient to pleasure, not the other way around. That's a thread of error that runs through the entire AI analysis.

2. Same for the AI positions on katastematic and kinetic pleasure and tranquility. Those are aspects and types of pleasure, but not the goal in itself. Pleasure is the goal, not some single type of pleasure or tranquility. Epicurus says that PLEASURE is the alpha and omega of a blessed life, not tranquility.

3. Communal living is also a "tool" and not an end in itself. Epicurus in fact specifically is recorded to have held that community holding of money is not appropriate, because holding money in common is not the way friendship operates. The AI bot is misinterpreting the issue of individualism vs collectivism as if collectivism or community or friendship were the goal of Epicurus. The goal of Epicurus is pleasure - which includes the pleasure of your friends, because the welfare of your friends is pleasurable to you - and there are times when you will even die for a friend. But every random stranger is not your friend, and you have no duty or obligation to them except to the extent that other people contribute to your goal of pleasure.

4. Same with necessary and unnecessary desires. The principle of the classification, as Torquatus explains, is that by considering these factors you can estimate the amount of pleasure and pain that will arise from certain choices and avoidances. But it is clearly established that you will sometimes choose pain in order to obtain a pleasure that is greater than the pain. Once again, this analysis is a tool, not an end in itself. Many tools are possible, but no tool - especially the tool of "virtue"- is an end in itself, nor is any tool choiceworthy unless it leads to pleasurable living.