

"Pleasure" vs "Pleasant Experiences"

Post by "Cassius" of February 6, 2025 at 2:47 PM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

If people hear 'pleasure' and think 'bodily pleasure', I do not regard that as a problem - mainly because I think those people are probably motivated to this misinterpretation by religion or politics or culture or upbringing, and they would reject Epicureanism no matter how thoroughly it was explained to them.

Yep -- they are not completely wrong at all -- they are just only partly right.

And what I read you to be saying is that we have to realize that this issue is not just difference of opinion as to words. In fact, those who try to water down Epicurus to please his enemies may well be making the much worse mistake.

If you were ever to succeed in making people who are suspicious of pleasure really understand what Epicurus was saying, you should not expect them to say "Oh, I get it, that's neat - let's go have a party!"

They are more likely to say "*Now I see what you're doing! What you're doing would totally replace [insert name of preferred God or Virtue here]! Now that I understand you, I see that there's no coming to an agreement with you. Get out of my life and my city -- It's time for war, heathen!*

And unfortunately a lot of ancient Epicureans probably experienced exactly that result. Had Plutarch and the earliest church fathers had the power to eliminate the Epicureans by force, rather than just writing books against them, they might well have done that. And at least one of the religious holidays that exists today (I'm thinking Hanukkah) [celebrates something very close to that](#) (see the section *Epicureanism and the Judeans*).

So just like the Epicurean mentioned in Alexander the Oracle monger, we need to be careful in deciding who is open to discussion and how to talk with them.

As I have said, Alexander was much afraid of Epicurus, and the solvent action of his logic on imposture.

[Quote from Lucian - Alexander the Oracle Monger](#)

On one occasion, indeed, an Epicurean got himself into great trouble by daring to expose him before a great gathering. He came up and addressed him in a loud voice.

'Alexander, it was you who induced So-and-so the Paphlagonian to bring his slaves before the governor of Galatia, charged with the murder of his son who was being educated in Alexandria. Well, the young man is alive, and has come back, to find that the slaves had been cast to the beasts by your machinations.'

What had happened was this. The lad had sailed up the Nile, gone on to a Red Sea port, found a vessel starting for India, and been persuaded to make the voyage. He being long overdue, the unfortunate slaves supposed that he had either perished in the Nile or fallen a victim to some of the pirates who infested it at that time; so they came home to report his disappearance. Then followed the oracle, the sentence, and finally the young man's return with the story of his absence.

All this the Epicurean recounted. Alexander was much annoyed by the exposure, and could not stomach so well deserved an affront. He directed the company to stone the man, on pain of being involved in his impiety and called Epicureans. However, when they set to work, a distinguished Pontic called Demonstratus, who was staying there, rescued him by interposing his own body. The man had the narrowest possible escape from being stoned to death—as he richly deserved to be; what business had he to be the only sane man in a crowd of madmen, and needlessly make himself the butt of Paphlagonian infatuation?