

Toronto Canada Meetup Group (Discussion on Implementation)

Post by "AxA" of February 25, 2025 at 12:30 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

As to these, here are some personal comments. Not everyone will respond the same, and everyone has to do what they think is right with their own local group. With that caveat, here are some thoughts as to "some of the objections that came up:"

Quote

- Pain as a source of meaning vs boring bland state of continuous pleasure (I did not even get into the whole "pleasure as absence of pain" definitional issue, and this came up at the end and was never really addressed)

Yes, this is why it is necessary ultimately to get into this issue of what "pleasure" really is, and how it encompasses everything we find desirable in life, mentally and physically. There is literally no activity that anyone will find desirable for them to pursue that is not to them pleasure, and there is absolutely no reason for them not to be willing to pursue whatever activities that bring them pleasure, so long as they in fact bring them more pleasure than pain. It is a killer problem to be boxed into pleasure as being ONLY sipping wine and eating cheese, and I would avoid that like the plague by taking it head on. Epicureans like Cassius Longinus and his friends certainly did not live that way, nor did those who engaged in spreading the philosophy through writing, and you can cite the examples given by Torquatus in On Ends Book One as to his ancestors who were military leaders being totally reconcilable to Epicurean philosophy.

Pain is not meaning in itself, it's just pain, and Epicureans are fully willing to embrace pain when the result is more pleasure (desirable living) than pain.

There is much that can and should be done to develop this point, and I would push back hard at it any time it raises its head. And it will raise its head, regularly, anytime a group gets started or new people come in, because this attitude is entrenched in the Stoicized view of Epicurus that has prevailed in the academic world for many years. Modern histories and commentaries on Epicurus are mostly written by people who disagree with large aspects of the philosophy, and who want to pick bits and pieces of it just to pursue their own agendas (primarily based on virtue-based ethics). Everyone is going to want to deal with this issues in their own way, but this is the reason for the

part of our website which states that it is devoted to "[Classical Epicurean Philosophy](#)" and not "neo-Epicureanism"

[About Us: Classical Epicurean Philosophy Unadulterated by Humanism, Platonism, Stoicism, Buddhism, or Other Eclecticism](#)

Quote

- The necessity of dealing with violent external enemies raised on hate who will be "harder" than you chill garden people (I had to reassure this guy I'm not a pacifist, but it remains an issue how much to compromise in the name of defence)

Again this objection would be a killer if true, but there is no reason to accept it. There is every reason to believe that Epicurus and his friends complied with their military service. No one ever accused them of refusing to serve when their time came, and you can be sure that would have been charged had it happened. As in the first answer, you can cite Torquatus, Cassius Longinus, and even Julius Caesar himself as people who were either explicit or implicit Epicureans. "Passivism" as a goal makes no more sense than "virtue," as a goal. Sometimes it is a good idea, sometimes a terrible idea. "Turning the other cheek" is Christianity, not Epicureanism.

Quote

- The value of spiritual beliefs and practices in comforting the afflicted (one participant gave an impassioned speech about the beauty of Aphrodite's grief over the death of Adonis and how oppressed women could find comfort in this. I had no response)

At a deep level you have to come to terms with whether a person is so afraid of pain that they want to adopt fantasy answers, or whether they want the truth. Not everyone wants the truth and those who don't are not going to be at home with Epicurean philosophy. Epicurus appeals mostly to those who see life as intrinsically pleasurable, rather than intrinsically suffering (such as Buddhism or the like) or those who would have preferred never to have been born, or who are in revolt against nature because they themselves think they are superior to nature. You could go on and on with this answer but this is a part of the reason that Epicurus advised not giving in to "the crowd" and to their false beliefs, and Diogenes of Oinoanda pointed out how the crowd catches the disease of false beliefs like sheep. You do your best to help everyone who

wants to be helped, but there are lots who don't and you can't let them hold you and your friends back from living happily yourselves.

Quote

- A sense that this philosophy is "for individuals" (or friend groups) and is somehow disconnected from wider politics, something that only the privileged can do, and that does not address world issues (my usual response to this is instead of trying to influence how people vote, which is "downstream" of their beliefs and values, I see more potential in going "upstream" to these beliefs and values themselves - imagine how a world of Epicureans would vote)

As to the philosophy being only for the privileged, that too comes from the false definition of pleasure as ONLY consisting of luxury and sensual stimulation. As for Epicureans being aloof from politics, that is a false idea in large part. Epicurus advised against pursuing a political CAREER, as that places you at the mercy of the mob, but he did not advise against action when action is appropriate. This is developed very well in the Boeri book referenced here on the cite (podcast interview with the author is here):

The Lucretius Today Podcast Interviews:

Dr. Marcelo Boeri

co-author of

**THEORY AND PRACTICE IN
EPICUREAN POLITICAL
PHILOSOPHY:**

Security, Justice, And Tranquility



Blog Article

[Lucretius Today Interviews Dr. Marcelo Boeri - co-author of "Theory and Practice of Epicurean Political Philosophy: Security, Justice, and Tranquility"](http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/4302-toronto-canada-meetup-group-discussion-on-implementation/?postID=34229#post34229)

In Episode 197 of the Lucretius Today Podcast, on October 19, 2023, we were privileged to speak with Dr. Marcelo Boeri, co-author with Javier Aoiz of **Theory and Practice In Epicurean Political Philosophy - Security, Justice, and Tranquility.** Professor of Ancient Philosophy at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. Dr. Boeri is originally from Buenos Aires, and after receiving his Ph.D. from the University of Salvador in 1995, he has worked extensively in the field of Ancient Greek...



Cassius

October 22, 2023 at 8:20 PM

As mentioned before, we have a rule against pursuing politics here at the forum, and I would advise something similar in any local group, especially in getting off the ground. But that is not a policy against individuals pursuing political issues outside the group, and in fact I personally advise engagement and participation in anything you think will truly lead to greater pleasure for you. The problem with allowing those discussions within the groups is that they are too divisive, and they will lead to the false perception that Epicurean philosophy is necessarily capitalist or communist or left or right or any other necessary grouping. There are clearly some things (primarily supernatural religion) which are off limits due to the philosophy itself, but like-minded friends can organize themselves in many different ways and still be entirely consistent with core Epicurean views. For those who want to debate, it's the aloofness and asceticism of Stoicism that would by nature lead to inactivity. David Sedley has a good article on "The Ethics of Brutus and Cassius" which mentions how -- if you want to talk about resistance to 'tyranny' for example - it's the Stoics who generally postured rather than acted when action was deemed appropriate.

Display More

I think I'm going to have to get into the definition of pleasure issue in the very next discussion.

The idea of life being "primarily suffering" vs "primarily pleasure" is interesting, and I might just say that if you see life as primarily suffering, you will probably find greater comfort in Christianity, Buddhism, and Stoicism, which seek to "revolt against" or "transcend" nature to escape from suffering or somehow give it meaning. I'm very fortunate to live a primarily pleasant life, and I want to spread that and be around others who also feel this or who are at least open to the possibility of a mostly pleasant life.

I sometimes start to get excited about the idea of spreading and expanding the movement, but I have to keep reminding myself that having 10 excellent friends is far better than having 10,000 followers.

I want to encourage this to spread, but I like the idea of a large number of microcommunities based around compatible groups of friends. No need for one unified organization that works for everyone. If groups of Christians, Buddhists and Stoics form friendly associations where they

support each other as good friends then that's a net good for everyone. Some Epicurean ideas could be helpful for them even if they reject a lot of the others.

In fact, of all the Epicurean ideas we covered, I think the extreme high value placed on friendship is the most significant of all. Something that could be a benefit even to people who disagree with everything else in the philosophy.