

Discussion of Article: "Political Division In The Promotion of Epicurean Philosophy: A Prescription For Disaster"

Post by "Cassius" of September 28, 2019 at 10:32 AM

[Post by Elayne]:

Although I'm fairly active on various specific political issues that affect my life, I do not belong to a political party, because all of them contain heavy elements of idealism.

A party or political system I would regard as Epicurean would be recognizable by the _process_ members went through to reach their individual positions, from which they would negotiate with others-- not by their specific positions on the issues.

I decide my positions on issues according to my assessment of effects on my pleasure, which includes the pleasure of those I care about. But when I discuss politics with non-Epicureans, this is not how they are going about it-- they are approaching it as a team sport, rather than negotiating within their team and explaining to each other how they are conducting their hedonic calculus.

For a specific perspective on issue X, we could say maybe there are perspectives A, B, and C. Different Epicureans could take the perspectives A, B, or C because their pleasures differ, because the issue affects their pleasures differently, or because they are predicting the outcomes of action differently. For the first two possibilities, they may be able to negotiate based on give and take on a range of additional issues, commonly called horse-trading. For the 3rd, it could be very useful for them to compare how they are making their predictions of net effects of action, because they may learn from each other and change their minds based on scientific analysis. This last type of discussion is only possible if participants are willing to put their own pleasure ahead of idealism.

In a group of Epicureans engaged in politics, at least we would have the process of decision-making in common, and discussions would make more sense. But the excerpts from Wilson's book show that she is not using an Epicurean process at all-- she is not talking about what would give her pleasure. She is a social utilitarian.