

New (October 1 2019) Catherine Wilson Speech Video on Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Cassius" of October 10, 2019 at 2:00 PM

[Quote from Hiram](#)

"Then at about 13:50 she says: "Coming to terms with these limits is really the center of Epicurean ethical philosophy." And here I have to disagree. In my reading of Epicurus, the center is really the principle of pleasure and avoidance of pain. Limits play a peripheral role. I could be wrong, and I'd like to here what other members here think of this.

I'll listen to the rest and add to my comments later"

I remember that diogenes mentioned that not knowing the limits of our desires among the three "roots of all evil". So this must have been of great importance.

Fr. 34

... reasoning ... [of happiness] [is ... hope, after selection of these], and cure of erring emotions. So where, I say, the danger is great, so also is the fruit. Here we must turn aside these fallacious arguments on the grounds that they are insidious and insulting and contrived, by means of terminological ambiguity, to [lead] wretched human beings [astray] [let us] not [avoid every pain that is present, and let us not choose every pleasure, as the many always do. Each person must employ reasoning,] since he [will not always achieve immediate success: just as] exertion (?) [often] involves one [gain at the beginning and] certain [others as time passes by], so it is also with [experiencing pleasure;] for sowings of seeds do [not] bring [the same benefit] to the sower but we see some seeds very quickly germinating [and bearing fruit and others taking longer] of pleasures and [pains] [pleasure].

And so the [are] If [prudence.]

Let us now [investigate] how life is to be made pleasant for us both in states and in actions.

Let us first discuss states, keeping an eye on the point that, when the emotions which disturb the soul are removed, those which produce pleasure enter into it to take their place.

Well, what are the disturbing emotions? [They are] fears —of the gods, of death, and of [pains]— and, besides [these], desires that [outrun] the limits fixed by nature. These are the **roots** of all evils, and, [unless] we cut them off, [a multitude] of evils will grow [upon] us.

[Well, let us examine] our fear of the gods ...

Ok it looks to me like the three being referred to in that passage are three fears - of gods, of death, and of pains, with the general point under discussion there being "disturbing emotions."

I kind of agree that the statement ""Coming to terms with these limits is really the center of Epicurean ethical philosophy" is really pretty loose and overbroad, especially if you follow the traditional sequence of fear of the gods and fear of death being the most important issues to deal with at the very beginning.

Certainly the issue of realizing that desires are not unlimited, and need not be pursued to infinity, is an important part of Epicurean philosophy. But I would not say that it is "at the center," and Lucretius doesn't address it at length until Book 2.

But I wouldn't stress too much either way on Wilson's statements here. It seems to me that this entire presentation is kind of loose and general, especially in the way she presents it. She might indeed take that position in print in her book but I haven't looked at it yet.