

Happy Twentieth of December, 2019

Post by “Elayne” of December 21, 2019 at 9:09 AM

Happy day after the 20th, lol. I spent yesterday getting ready for and singing in a Solstice concert. We had a lot of fun!

I think 2020 will be a year of clarification. There are some differing and sometimes incompatible perspectives out there regarding Epicurean philosophy. Some are not challenges to the load-bearing framework of the philosophy but more style preferences (eg, isms or not)-- and others directly weaken or remove key pillars, by inserting incompatible philosophies like Buddhism or social utilitarianisms and idealisms like humanism, or by making abstractions about pleasure. I think it's time to make that clear between groups.

When I read Hiram's recent writing about Buddhist forms of introspection being a way to learn about the self, for instance, I know clearly that our versions of Epicurean philosophy are different. Buddhists do have some variations, but a core feature is the assertion that by closely introspecting on oneself, a person will experience directly that there is no self and that our ordinary experience of self and reality is a delusion. There are neurologic events that cause this and are related to what the brain does when typical environmental stimuli are removed. A concerning number of people without prior psychiatric disturbances have suffered long lasting dysfunction from this, anything from dissociative symptoms to psychosis.

This kind of activity is in striking contrast to Epicurus' repeated advice to meditate on nature-- to study what our sense organs and feelings, as triggered by ordinary interaction with reality, tell us. Not to undo the ordinary workings of the brain, which when functioning in the way it has evolved, is able to choose and plan for pleasure.

I will be interested in seeing the Society of Epicurus' statement. I am expecting it to incorporate elements that I will find to be structurally unsound. If it does not, I will be thrilled!

And those of us who adhere to the classical teachings of Epicurus will continue to clarify our position, sometimes by contrasting it with alternate views, just as Epicurus did.

That is a good thing IMO. People will be more easily able to choose the perspective they prefer.