

Post by "Cassius" of February 15, 2020 at 3:49 PM

I was going to put this in a separate thread but I think I will put it here. Some of you have probably seen this exchange on facebook. I really like the guy asking the question so I will just put the exchange here without names because I don't want this to seem to be a hit on him personally. LOTS of people do this -- even people writing here on this forum with the best of intentions, because they just refuse or can't grasp the issue of how contextual Epicurean philosophy is. So we have a huge task of getting this issue front and center and dealing with it. Here's the exchange:

Q. Epicurus argues that egoism will align with virtue, but isnt there possible scenarios where choosing pleasure will go against virtue?

Cassius:

Of course there will be conflict to anyone who holds that 'virtue' is objective or absolute, but to Epicurus, virtue has no meaning or use other than being productive of pleasure, so in Epicurean terms such a conflict will not occur. This is discussed at length in Cicero's On Ends by Torquatus. As to "egoism" that has no relation to Epicurean philosophy either because the goal is pleasure, not "egoism."

Q. what if my pleasure goes against doing the right thing?

Cassius: What is "the right thing"? There IS no "right thing"! You'll conclude that Epicurus is wrong in the end because you're accepting the premises of those who are against him and suggest that god or Plato can tell you "the right thing." Which is fine - everyone can accept or reject what they like, but at least be sure you understand the issue, and the questions you are asking indicate that you do not understand Epicurus on a very basic level -- which is true of a *lot* of people - because they refuse to give up the idea that their own perception of "virtue" is "the correct one."

The reason I post this is that - among the people likely to read our Epicurean posts on the internet - we can probably count the number of people for whom this lesson has sunk in on the thumbs of one foot. This is a VERY difficult point for people to understand - they have been indoctrinated all their lives to believe that there is a "right" and a "wrong" and that their own views of "virtue" align with those abstractions.

There is no way that people will truly understand epicurean philosophy as long as they struggle with that point.

The relationship of this point to the article is that it is VERY easy for people to skip over this essential fundamental and presume that all they need to do is "take a pill" for anxiety and they need make no further adjustments. In that respect "giving up the pursuit of power, fame, and money" is just another PILL -- adopting that strategy without understanding the wider framework of WHY and HOW you should adjust your life ends up being almost worthless, because you'll just careen like a bumper car into another error.