

Characteristics of the Wise Man, 1-9 Rough Draft of Outline

Post by "Cassius" of May 31, 2020 at 8:06 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

This opportunity to talk through these issues is truly one of the values in finding this forum.

Definitely!

[Quote from Don](#)

. I consider something like equality for all genders and races to be universal.

Ok here is my interpretation, I think "slavery" as you mentioned is probably the ultimate emotional test, but these are good too.

I think where Epicurus was going is to recognize BOTH that:

(1) Our feeling is the ultimate guide for life, and that means that we will die for things that we feel to be important enough to us like friends, or whatever we happen to feel at that level of intensity, which would include our political values of equality or whatever we feel intensely about. The "friends" example is the one I use here because Epicurus explicitly is recorded to have said that we will on appropriate occasions die for our friends.

(2) That despite the intensity of our feelings and our personal willingness on appropriate occasions to fight and die for our feelings, we still have to admit that these are OUR feelings, and that they aren't sanctioned by "God" or even by some cosmic "Nature." The ultimately is no prime mover / supernatural / teleological "right" and "wrong" in the universe, and we justify our actions based on the only guide we have - our individual senses of pleasure and pain, just like all other animals do.

This is ultimately why I react so strongly against the "passivist" or the "tranquility above all" view of Epicurus, because that conflicts totally with the view that we stake all our actions to the flag of feeling. There is no way that I could accept that Epicurus (or we) would turn our backs on our friends, or on the basic values that motivate us, just so we could eke out a few extra moments of "tranquility" in our cave with our bread and water and cheese. There is NO WAY that Epicurus advocated such a position. We could go on and on listing and arguing the reasons for that conclusion, and that is in fact why I spend so much time on it and think it is so

essential, but ultimately I think Epicurus would tell us that we grasp this not really intellectually, but through **feeling**.

I know that it is shocking to a lot of people to give up the argument that there is some "higher sanction" for their personal views of right and wrong, but I can't think of anything in the Epicurean physics (the nature of the universe) that would allow such a position. In fact everything in it goes in the opposite direction - that the universe is truly ultimately reducible to combinations of matter and void that are constantly changing, and in such a system there is no room for Platonic ideals or any other kind of "universal" or "absolute" rules of right and wrong.

But at the same time, we do and should fight to the death, just like all other animals do, for our ultimate feelings about what is important to us in life.

That's why the tranquilist view is to me not just intellectually and factually "incorrect" based on the record, but totally unacceptable and irreconcilable at a basic feeling / emotional level with the thrust of Epicurean philosophy.