

Emotional states from an epicurean pov

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of July 18, 2020 at 11:34 AM

Hello all,

something I have been thinking about lately is emotional states, specifically negative ones. It seems to me feeling anxious or feeling down (not clinically but simply for a period of time) are very painful, however I completely disagree with the Stoics who give techniques to manage or even repress these emotions as that leads to an unhappy life and eventually a distrust of emotions.

An Epicurean will feel his or hers emotions more deeply, but our goal overall is pleasure and everything should be oriented to feeling real pleasure (as opposed the potential pleasure or virtue, as we say in Ireland “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”. Should we therefore try not to feel our negative emotions deeply?

Also as a side note, the tranquility epicurean view seems to silly and also unacceptable. Who can stop themselves from feeling pain? Anxiety or sadness can occur for any reason or no reason at all.

My thoughts are simply now to examine the feeling and see what purpose it is serving me, am I having thoughts causing it or is it the result of an action? Is it warning me of something painful?

Taking its usefulness into regard, it seems preferable to feel anxiety and sadness sometimes (again not clinical such as anxiety disorder or depression, get help if you suffer from these) but only if it can help identify a threat of further pain or it can help identify an action we took which lead to this anxiety so we can avoid it in the future.

In this regard we Epicureans have a “friendly” relationship with our healthy emotional (non clinical) even if they are painful. It’s very different than other philosophies such as stoicism and Christianity which threat negative emotions as enemies no matter what (even if they aid in obtaining pleasure) or in the latter case proof of your guilt.

My thoughts are still fresh in thinking about this so forgive my unrefined writings, what are your thoughts on this?