

Emotional states from an epicurean pov

Post by "Cassius" of July 18, 2020 at 8:31 PM

Yes saw that and thanks for posting the link. I read it and discussed it with a couple of others but we decided not to "promote" it because MFS personally seems to have more of a "minimalism" view of Epicurus than I think I am comfortable with promoting. He's undoubtedly one of the greatest living scholars on Epicurus and certainly on Diogenes of Oinoanda, and of course when he says something it deserves respect.

My concerns relate to the recent ongoing discussion that we have had in the thread primarily started by [Don](#)

For example:

exists in the sense that fools make a hell of their lives on earth. At the same time those who live wisely can enjoy a godlike happiness.

Such happiness is experienced by those who live a simple life, satisfying those desires that are natural and necessary, such as those for essential food, drink, clothing, and shelter, and eliminating those, like the desires for wealth, status, and sensual pleasures, that are unnecessary and, because they are impossible to satisfy, certain to involve pain.

Well, yes, and we all know the passage about Epicurus saying that bread and water is basically all he needed to compete with the gods in happiness. And yet I don't think it is correct to say flatly that "godlike happiness" will necessarily be experienced "by those who live a simple life, satisfying those desires that are natural and necessary, and eliminating ... those that are unnecessary...."

I think we who are deeply read in Epicurus understand the context in which MFS is writing, but is this really clearly enough stated to promote to those who don't understand the contextual nature of these considerations?

Also:

Epicurus would have hoped that, in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, his teachings would help the sick to bear their illness with equanimity and the rest of us to keep our worries, fears, frustrations, and disappointments in perspective, to be as calm and positive as possible, rejoicing in our good health if we are lucky enough to retain it, and in general to count our blessings, including those of love and friendship, possession of which was very important to him and his school. Probably he would have hoped also that his teachings would help us to review the way many of us have been living our lives and to reassess our priorities and values.

Again, well - yes -- but would Epicurus have had nothing to say about the specific actions that should be taken to guard against contracting the disease, against spreading it, and doing the research necessary to find cures? Would Epicurus just have passively accepted the situation and not considered it to be a challenge to his scientific nature, a challenge to be met with vigorous research and action?

(and that's the analogy i draw to the conversation with Don. I see Epicurus as an ACTIVIST, as a scientific researcher and "crusader" for more pleasure and less pain, and not as the kind of stoic-like personality who is concerned primarily with controlling reactions to things that we resign ourselves to be out of our control.

I hate to make these negative comments and that's why I haven't affirmatively posted about the article. It doubtless contains a lot of good scholarship and I have nothing but respect and appreciation for Martin Ferguson Smith.

But I do see our work here in the forum as a matter of both understanding and getting a more clear picture of what Epicurus really taught, and I am afraid in regard to MFS (at least in this article, I don't know what else he has published lately) I am afraid that his viewpoint represents a consensus that isn't really informed by the DeWitt perspective, and (if I thought it were completely accurate) would be a major turn-off to me in pursuing Epicurus as of more than historical interest.

So as a final word, in terms of how the article relates to the points raised in this thread by Eoghan, I am afraid I think that the article probably is more reflective of the kind of viewpoint that Eoghan is posting against, rather than for.

But this is very good addition to the thread and I hope others will comment on this.