

Cultivating our own garden [Voltaire Discussion]

Post by "Cassius" of September 17, 2020 at 4:54 AM

This video reminded me why I personally *REALLY* react negatively to Alaine de Botton. (I'll check the spelling later).

On the other hand, Voltaire has always interested me, but I've not read him closely enough to know whether this take is accurate or not.

There's clearly a part of it that I agree is Epicurean, especially in the high-level perspective that most people have absolutely no control or ability to influence the world in general, so that it makes no sense to spend your life worrying about trying to change "the world," or however you define accurately the sphere that is indeed beyond your ability to influence.

But I think de Botton carries his quietism WAY too far, and from my hearing his voice tends to revel in the advice to "sit down, give up, tune out, give in" --- in tone that makes me think that de Botton is only too happy to "give out" this advice to others while not following it himself.

I don't think Epicurus was guilty of inconsistency on these points, because I don't have the same view of Epicurus that de Botton apparently does. I think Epicurus DID say that we needed to work as hard as we can to live as pleasantly as possible,, which includes not obsessing about things beyond our control, but also means working as hard as we can to control things that ARE within our ability to influence. And that last part is the message that I NEVER hear in this video or in De Botton's other work. It is as if he is a master propagandist for the "power class" of the world, reveling in this philosophy because it creates compliant sheep for De Botton and his intellectual elite to order around like farm animals.

"Tending your own garden" may sound like a reflection of something Epicurus might have said, but I don't recall anything that is actually recorded in the texts as being so specifically "quietist" - so I think messages like this are much more destructive than helpful.

[But I don't aim this at you camotero! 😊 I think it's hugely helpful to discuss material like this, which in my view presents the majority / academic viewpoint, so we can each come to terms with what we think is the bad and the good of it. Certainly Epicurus did say some things that can be interpreted in this direction, so we have to each of us have a method of understanding and incorporating *everything* Epicurus said so that we have a firm grasp of the whole philosophy.]