

td76's outline

Post by "Cassius" of April 5, 2018 at 6:29 PM

Good to hear from you TD76! Here are my thoughts on each of your sections, again remembering that there's two ways of looking at these things: (1) Do they accurately reflect Epicurus? and (2) Do we think personally they are correct? My comments are primarily from perspective one:

(1) This one seems very complete, very accurate, and well stated.

(2) This section is probably more difficult, and that's reflected in the brevity of your treatment. What you've said of course is fine, but it's the implications of this section that are the beginning of the stark difference in approach as against the modern world. One of the most important aspects is to address the place and role of "reason" and "logic," and it would be good to expand this section to address that. It's also important to address what Epicurus meant by "truth," whether it is "relative" or "absolute," etc.

(3) I think perhaps because section (2) is a little abbreviated, section (3) is where you need to probably give the most attention. I grant you that your statements after the first two are consistent with the majority view that you'll find on the internet, but I would suggest to you that once in section (2) you fully take leave from any ideas of "absolute" truth or "absolute" justice or "absolute" morality, you'll have reason to reconsider some of your "must" phrasing in section 3. That's the first question I would pose to you - are these "musts" or are they "should probably depending on the circumstances" rules of thumb? Converting them from "musts" to "tools" helps refocus the emphasis from the "tool" to the result, which is going to vary widely according to circumstances.

I would say the same comment especially applies to "live unknown" and "avoid politics." Those are two of the most common deductions of the "passivist" view of Epicurus, to which I personally suggest people keep an open mind toward whether they might be substantially off base, especially if considered to be "musts." We have many examples in the ancient world of Epicureans who did not "live unknown" or "avoid politics," even including the founders, and certainly considering prominent Epicureans in the Roman world.

So in general I think your comments are a great start at a good outline, and the process of working through it and talking about it will be good for you (and all of us who participate here) because these same questions arise over and over.

When you say you are "still thinking about some things" -- are there any in particular that would be good to discuss?