

AntiSeneca

Post by “Charles” of January 21, 2020 at 11:41 PM

Here's the opening statement to Anti-Seneca, its quite wordy but already so pleasing and promising.

"The Philosophers have come to no more agreement about happiness than about anything else. Some of them see it in the dirtiest and most brazen deeds; these are recognizable by their unblushing Cynical faces. Others would have it consist of voluptuousness, understood in various ways--whether the refined voluptuousness of love, or the same voluptuousness but tempered, rational, and tamed: not as dictated by the lusty whims of a fevered imagination, but only by the needs of nature: here we have the voluptuousness of the mind that is either addicted to the pursuit of truth, or entranced by its possession; there, finally, you have peace of mind, the grounding and aim of all we do, which Epicurus called “voluptuousness”: a is [sic.] dangerously ambiguous word, which led his disciples to carry home a fruit that is quite different from what this great personality had intended. Others have seen the highest good in the possession of every perfection of mind and body. In Zeno’s conception, it is found in honor and virtue. Seneca, the most illustrious Stock of all, said it could be found in knowing the truth, but he didn’t specify what truths he meant.

To live in tranquility, without ambitions, without desire; to use wealth, but not enjoy it; to keep all of it without anxiety, to lose it without regret, to be its master instead of its slave; to remain undisturbed and unmoved by any passion whatsoever or, even better, not to experience any passions at all; to be equally content with poverty or opulence: with pain, as with pleasure; to have a soul that’s strong and sound, in a body thats weak and sickly; to feel neither fear nor terror; to strip away all anxiety, to scorn pleasure and voluptuousness; to consent to have pleasure in the same way as to be rich, without reaching for these comforts; to despise even life: finally, to achieve virtue by knowing the truth; here we have the highest good, as per Seneca and the Stoics generally speaking, with the perfect beatitude that follows.

How Anti-Stoical will we be, then! These philosophers are severe, sad, and hardened--we’ll be pleasant, cheerful, and indulgent. They are all soul, ignoring their bodies; let’s be all body, ignoring our souls. They act like they don’t care about pleasure and pain; we’ll stride ourselves on feeling anything whatsoever. Striving for the sublime, they rise above all events, and they only call themselves to be men to the extent they cease to be human. As for us, we will not presume to regulate that which governs us; we will not command our sensations; confessing their authority and our slavery, we will try to make them pleasant for us, as persuaded as we are that that is where happiness in life is to be found: finally, we will think ourselves happier to the extent that we are human, or worthy to be such; how much of a feeling will we have for nature, humanity, and all the social virtues; we will accept no others, nor any life aside from

this one only. So we see that the chain of truths that are necessary for happiness is shorter than those forged by Hegesias, Descartes, and many other philosophers; that to explain the mechanism of happiness we need only consult nature and reason--the only two stars that can shine the way and guide us; but we must open our souls to their rays and seal all access to it against those poisoned miasmas that create, as it were, the atmosphere of fanaticism and prejudice. Let's begin."

Post by "Cassius" of January 27, 2020 at 1:46 PM

Charles I hope I haven't botched this new thread. Let me know if so

Post by "Hiram" of January 27, 2020 at 2:29 PM

Interesting that he includes Hegesias (a Cyrenaic) among the stoics and idealists.

It was against him that Anniceris wrote, when he proposed a philosophy of friendship (replacing Hegesias' misanthropy with philanthropy) and believed happiness to be attainable (replacing Hegesias' pessimism with optimism), and these developments make him THE CHAIN that connects the Cyrenaic tradition to the Epicurean tradition, so much so that scholars consider Anniceris a "proto-Epicurean".

Here are my notes on Hegesias from Lampe's book:

<https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/2016/07/15/cyr...-and-anniceris/>

Quote

Hegesias

Magnanimous people seem disdainful. - Hegesias

Hegesias had a huge difference of opinion with Anniceris on what makes up the ideal life. Among his anti-social views, we find that he believed that the sage is like a king, has no peer and can't have friends. He viewed all human relations as subject-object interactions and considered people to be merely instrumental. He also praised the

virtue of detached enjoyment of courtesans and the treatment of women as sexual objects, with the understanding that the objectification was mutual.

[Lampe](http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1406-antiseneca/) argues that “hero ethics” was domesticated by philosophers, and that Hegesias embodies a sort of “heroic code”, where the philosopher is likened to a king. The traditional Greek heroic code involved good reputation, tokens of honor, competition, and violence. This heroic code does not seem particularly hedonistic, and in fact seems to generate great pain and bring ruin to the people.

There is another instance where this ancient intellectual does not seem to fit the profile of a pleasure-seeker. Hegesias claimed that happiness (eudaimonia) was impossible, and his pessimism was notorious for having influenced some of his listeners to commit suicide, according to spurious surviving anecdotes.

Like Aristippus the Younger, Hegesias believed in a “comprehensive end”, which he defined as “no pain or distress”. He also did not differentiate between sources of pleasure and, in defence of his virtue of indifference, he once said:

It doesn't matter how much money you have, the rich don't experience pleasure differently from the poor ... Fame and ignominy are (also) indifferent to pleasure.

He argued that when we disdain fame, we become self sufficient in honor, and that since most people lack the intelligence to judge whether or not we're great, we should therefore live with indifference to fame (that is, *lathe biosas*).

He also argued (less convincingly) that slavery and freedom were equal and could afford similar amounts of pleasure. This, of course, is a questionable, perhaps a false, consolation.

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Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 7:00 AM

"They are all soul, ignoring their bodies; let's be all body, ignoring our souls."

I think I noted this earlier but in rereading this post I think it bears emphasis that it seems doubtful that Epicurus would pit it this way, rather he would likely have tended to the pleasures of both body and soul, even recognizing that at times the pleasures of the soul are greater than those of the body.

It will be interesting to see if Mettrie walks this statement of his back or carries it further because the rest does look very promising.

Post by “Hiram” of January 28, 2020 at 9:16 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"They are all soul, ignoring their bodies; let's be all body, ignoring our souls."

It will be interesting to see if Mettrie walks this statement of his back or carries it further because the rest does look very promising.

His book "Natural history of the soul" will show you that part of his project is to convince people that the soul is 1. physical / natural, and 2. mortal, and his study of the faculties of the soul will furthermore show you how familiar he is with the Epicurean canon.

Post by “Cassius” of January 28, 2020 at 10:59 AM

Well then if that is the case Hiram (that the soul is physical) is that not additional reason why Mettrie should not have said " let's ... ignore our souls..." but instead something like "let's pay attention to the messages from both body and soul because they are both physical?"

At this point it's probably not fair to focus too much on this passage in isolation, as we'll probably see from other material how Mettrie develops this. It's just that in the meantime it sounds like "... ignore our souls" probably was intended to mean something like "... let's ignore the idea of immortal or supernatural souls..."