

# Discussion of Article: "Caricatures to the Left of Them, Caricatures to the Right of Them, Caricatures In Front of Them, Volleyed and Thundered"

Post by "Cassius" of May 4, 2020 at 9:34 AM

Discussion Thread For: [Caricatures to the Left of Them, Caricatures to the Right of Them, Caricatures In Front of Them, Volleyed and Thundered](#)

---

Post by "Cassius" of May 4, 2020 at 11:03 AM

Well this pretty much checks every box for "demoralizing response" to the article. 😊

- Only a small subset of people are "capable" of understanding how the feeling of pleasure operates and influences a philosophy based on nature?

- I would like to interpret the rest of the response in as charitable a way as possible, but is it not saying "Yes I am a 'spectator' and I'm glad to be one" which has connotations that are pretty easy to find alarming, given the shortness of life?

We charging through the "Valley of Death" indeed! 😊



I agree that it is "small subset of people" that understand or are capable of understanding it.

As to the spectator comment, this might be coming from a person that wants to have an Epicurean involved in w/e their belief, stance, or calling is.

I can see their side, it is often where I tell friends not to get overwhelmed or too involved in others actions or motives, as the outcome you seek through a 2nd or 3rd party, will likely not be what prevails. Thus as someone who follows our philosophy, I do put my own pleasures first, so perhaps I am a spectator, paying attention to how I make my next move as is what's best for me and my cares.

Like · Reply · 52m · Edited

Cassius response:

I would disagree with the word "capable" in "capable of understanding it," but given the premise of the article that we are surrounded on virtually every side with people who relentlessly uphold Epicurus' definition of pleasure, at present it is probably true that only a relatively small number of people actually do see through the cannon fire. This issue is what DeWitt was referring to when he quoted Cicero as observing that people of "no great education" were those who embraced Epicurus "with gladness," since in Epicurus' and Cicero's day the cannon fire was not so strong that ordinary people were prevented from seeing the truth. Today, the "higher" the education, the greater the likelihood that people will accept the absurdity that Epicurus did not understand "pleasure" the same way we can and do ourselves, before we are "perverted."

DeWitt: "It was not usual to call the possession of health a pleasure and still less usual to call freedom from pain a pleasure. It was this objection that Cicero had in mind when he wrote: "You Epicureans round up people from all the crossroads, decent men, I allow, but certainly of no great education. Do such as they, then, comprehend what Epicurus means, while I, Cicero, do not?" The common people of the ancient world, however, for whom Platonism had nothing attractive, seem to have accepted Epicurean pragmatism with gladness. Cicero, being partial to the aristocratic philosophy and having no zeal to promote the happiness of the multitude, chose to sneer."

Torquatus: "We are inquiring, then, what is the final and ultimate Good, which as all philosophers are agreed must be of such a nature as to be the End to which all other things are means, while it is not itself a means to anything else. This Epicurus finds in pleasure; pleasure he holds to be the Chief Good, pain the Chief Evil. This he sets out to prove as follows: Every animal, as soon as it is born, seeks for pleasure, and delights in it as the Chief Good, while it recoils from pain as the Chief Evil, and so far as possible avoids it. This it does as long as it remains unperverted, at the prompting of Nature's own unbiased and honest verdict."

---

## **Post by "Cassius" of May 4, 2020 at 3:34 PM**

More discussion:

Do you not believe that perhaps there is a genetic disposition for the majority of people to claw for castles made of clouds?

It would seem to me that since the dawn of humanity (I forget exactly how many millions of years), that an adaptation took place for many to yearn for the metaphysics.

Seems I've tried my best sometimes to break friends from it, yet they almost can't get it.

Cassius' Reply:

I think you are right that it is natural for people to be confused about our place in the universe, and it is natural for people to come up with theories that are often wrong. But like Epicurus said, until they are perverted by wrong thinking, they naturally understand that pleasure is desirable and pain is undesirable, and it would not be rocket science to follow those observations to their logical conclusion, like Epicurus did, but for the "perversion" that comes from religion and false philosophies. Supernatural Religions and Platonic theories do not invent themselves; those take people who quickly learn how those theories can be used to manipulate the weaker-minded for their own (the manipulators') benefit.

So when you talk of working with your friends, you're talking about the 21st century and 20 additional centuries of development of peer pressures toward perversion than Epicurus faced in his time. We have advantages (such as the internet and more advanced science) that he didn't have, but the forces of perversion also have access to those tools, and they have had 2000 years of additional regimentation and practice toward pressuring people toward their views.

So I don't think you should judge yourself harshly if you fail to convince any particular set of friends, but you do have to ask yourself "Do I fully understand what Epicurus taught, especially about the faculty of pleasure and pain, and how those translate into a philosophy of practical living?" If you're teaching any variation of "one size fits all" (such that everyone needs to live more simply, or everyone needs to live less simply, or everyone needs to be more of a socialist or less of a socialist, etc etc), then by teaching one size fits all - like a lot of people do - you and the people you're trying to teach are missing the deeper implications of the role of pleasure and the rest of the philosophy.

---

## **Post by "Cassius" of May 4, 2020 at 3:36 PM**

More:

I agree that it is "small subset of people" that understand or are capable of understanding it.

As to the spectator comment, this might be coming from a person that wants to have an Epicurean involved in w/e their belief, stance, or calling is.

I can see their side, it is often where I tell friends not to get overwhelmed or too involved in others actions or motives, as the outcome you seek through a 2nd or 3rd party, will likely not

be what prevails. Thus as someone who follows our philosophy, I do put my own pleasures first, so perhaps I am a spectator, paying attention to how I make my next move as is what's best for me and my cares.

Elayne:

M. by spectator, Kimball means passive-- not making moves for yourself. If you are making moves, you are not a spectator! ☐ And that's a good thing-- making active choices gives you a better chance of having a pleasurable life!

M.:

Like just watching life go by? I guess I read it differently. For example, speaking politically, people can almost get offended if one chooses not to vote. It's as if they can't fathom someone not participating in a process they are deeply instilled in, calling that "being a spectator" but ignorant that a person is active in their own manners.

Granted, if you say, "fine I'll vote, but I'll vote for the other person!" Then they might get upset too lol.

Elayne:

I think the overall tone is to imply that we are passive, just watching life go by as if we were at a ballgame but not playing ourselves.

But you are right-- people who want to criticize us for not participating in whatever their preferred activity is tend to accuse us of some kind of failure to participate-- because it is their priority and not ours. That's not true, if we are participating in something else instead-- but that doesn't register with them.

They fail to realize people have different preferences. Which is part of what Cassius is talking about. We won't have all the same preferences, the same pleasures-- and really, how could we, considering we have biological differences? We are one species, so there will often be overlap in broad areas-- but we are not clones.

To imagine we would all have the same pleasures is like thinking all liquids should boil at the same temperature. It's not even c/w physics, lol.

It makes people mad when we don't agree, so then they pull out nonsense like in that quote. ☐