

Atlantic Article: There are two kinds of happy people

Post by “Don” of January 28, 2021 at 10:54 PM

<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive...ppiness/617847/>

Quote

I have found that most of the serious approaches to happiness can be mapped onto two ancient traditions, promoted by the Greek philosophers Epicurus and Epictetus. In a nutshell, they focus on enjoyment and virtue, respectively.

etc...

Post by “Elayne” of January 29, 2021 at 7:59 AM

I'm out of free articles this month, but I'll get to look in a couple of days! The part I can see looks silly, that we need a "balance" between virtue and pleasure [□□□□]. David Brooks isn't enjoying his virtues, I guess. I have to wonder about people like that. Are they sitting around thinking that they'd rather be robbing and murdering us, if it weren't for the dang virtues? [□] Are they only friendly acting because they think they are supposed to be, but secretly they hate being with us? What is up with that?!

Post by “Don” of January 29, 2021 at 8:27 AM

Quote

(Seneca's Letters - Book II - Letter LXXXV)

Epicurus also decides that one who possesses virtue is happy, but that **virtue of itself is not sufficient for the happy life, because the pleasure that results from virtue, and not virtue itself, makes one happy.**

It's not a matter of balance. "Virtues" are instrumental.

Quote

Fragment 70. Beauty and virtue and such are worthy of honor, if they bring joy; but if not then bid them farewell!

Post by "Cassius" of January 29, 2021 at 9:35 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

David Brooks isn't enjoying his virtues, I guess

I'm familiar with David Brooks so I clicked over to the article -- but unless I misread it the author is ARTHUR Brooks -- don't think I know anything about him. If my memory of David Brooks is correct I would definitely put him in the Stoic camp. 😊

Post by "Kalosyni" of June 22, 2022 at 8:47 AM

I discovered this article yesterday, and now I see it already has a thread on the forum thanks to [Don](#).

<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2021/01/how-balance-hard-work-and-pleasure-happiness/617847/>

[Quote from Don](#)

It's not a matter of balance. "Virtues" are instrumental.

That the virtues are instrumental is important to think about for anyone reading the article.

Also, we can see some of the popularized, over-simplified, and incorrect ideas about Epicureanism -- it claims Epicureans are seeking a happy life based on freedom from mental disturbance and absence of physical pain -- yet when we see the big picture through study of the entire Epicurean teachings, then we see that this not the full story -- we are also intentionally moving toward pleasure and enjoyment.

The article implies that Epicureans aren't seeking meaning in life -- but I would say that for myself I am finding meaning in studying Epicureanism and helping others study Epicureanism, as well as reclaiming pleasure as the goal of life and helping others do so as well -- so once again it is that the virtues are instrumental toward pleasure and happiness.

Post by “Root304” of June 23, 2022 at 7:29 PM

Putting duty and "high ideals" above all has been a path towards disaster and regret for me. I have that impulse towards self-abuse and plowing through pain, and there just is no ultimate sense of achievement in the end, even when the job was done well. The unintended consequences of damaged relationships and sour mood in operating that way are always worse than just not getting the job done or having to work with imperfect outcomes. Putting the business of pleasure above all leads me to a better attitude and I perform a job, have that social interaction and fulfill that duty more artfully bringing more aspects of myself to the task, and the mindset sets me up for better quality work over time.

Edit: Turn that ol' formulation on its head. You strive for Pleasure and the work gets done along the way.

Post by “Marco” of June 24, 2022 at 3:58 AM

Root304, I think listening to the Youtube from Wes Cecil 'You are not a slave', will give you insight why people want to endure suffering and pain.

There is a slip of the tongue in this lecture: Pythagoras should be Protagorus.

Post by “Root304” of June 24, 2022 at 5:30 PM

Eh, you'd have to sell it more before I will give it my attention. I am already not interested in the framing of "slavery" in any sort of attempt at self understanding.

Post by “Cassius” of June 25, 2022 at 5:49 AM

I see that the video (or audio I should say) is here:
https://www.reddit.com/r/lectures/com...values_you_are/

I don't have time now to review the whole video but the question got me thinking about relevant potential analogies to slavery in Epicurean texts. While there are others, the one that jumped out at me was from Menoecus:

Quote

[134] For, indeed, it were better to follow the myths about the gods than to become a slave to the destiny of the natural philosophers: for the former suggests a hope of placating the gods by worship, whereas the latter involves a necessity which knows no placation. As to chance, he does not regard it as a god as most men do (for in a god's acts there is no disorder), nor as an uncertain cause (of all things) for he does not believe that good and evil are given by chance to man for the framing of a blessed life, but that opportunities for great good and great evil are afforded by it.

Seems to me that Epicurus reacted negatively to the ultimate slavery of hard determinism (or maybe better word "necessity") with about as much energy - or more - than we today react to issues of personal slavery.

VS09. *Necessity is an evil, but [there is no necessity to live under the control of necessity.](#)*

Post by “Don” of June 25, 2022 at 6:16 AM

FYI:

The word used in 134 is δουλεύειν "to be enslaved", related to δούλος "one who is enslaved" (Note: keeping up the metaphor started with the mistress/master idioms in the previous verse)

134: "Since it is better to follow the fictional story of the gods than to be enslaved by the deterministic decrees of the old natural philosophers."

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, δ , δουλα^γωγ-ία , δουλ-εύω](#)

Post by “Root304” of June 25, 2022 at 11:17 AM

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1870-atlantic-article-there-are-two-kinds-of-happy-people/>

[Marco](#)

Sorry for my curtness. I read your initial comment in a more combative way as I am use to trying to argue for Epicurus to the religious and the mad.

Though, I definitely should have went with my gut in avoiding that video. I didn't want to start my day off enraged. His form of freedom I rebel against about as much as his conception of slavery, at least at this stage of my life. Pleasure for me is the action and feeling which nourishes my soul (Soul as we discussed elsewhere), which are actions that elevate beyond the mess of ambivalence in my volition and lack of Prudence in my ideations.