

Practical exercises: PD1

Post by “Godfrey” of June 28, 2021 at 9:09 PM

There has been some discussion lately as to “practice,” “therapy” or “exercises” in Epicurean philosophy, and this topic comes up regularly. My guess is that, in antiquity, this was accomplished through personal instruction and daily interaction in the garden. Lacking such a framework today, I’m posting this as a first pass at an alternative use of the Principle Doctrines as a series of practical or therapeutic exercises, not theoretical exercises, starting with PD1.

Quote

PD1: The blessed and incorruptible being has no troubles itself nor causes trouble for others; therefore it is not affected by anger or favor, for such things signify weakness. (my rendition)

Exercise: during the day, think about and emulate these paragons of Epicurean pleasure and visualize how you would live as a god among men. Specifically, be mindful of times when you are being affected by anger or favor. Experience these conditions, reflect without judgment, and carry on.

Notes: The original intent of this PD, to my understanding, was to describe and dispel the fear of the gods. This exercise is for those who are already cured of this malady, and is simply to practice the “idealist” conception of the gods. The “realist” conception of the gods is valid and important but, to me, is in the “theoretical” realm.

There is a discussion [here](#) about the words “blessed and incorruptible,” which are often translated as blessed and “immortal” or “imperishable.”

This exercise sounds like it was written by Captain Obvious, but I’m noticing that I’m affected much more than I expected and particularly relating to minor annoyances. Also the anger and favors sometimes are aroused from others, sometimes from within me.

Does this exercise eventually lead toward a state of pleasant equanimity from which to experience further varieties of pleasure?

Post by “Cassius” of July 8, 2021 at 10:40 AM

First:

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

My guess is that, in antiquity, this was accomplished through personal instruction and daily interaction in the garden. **Lacking such a framework today....**

Yes we lack the ability to live / work in close quarters in a single location in a single city, but we do have the option of interacting relatively closely on the internet, so we should work on ways of increasing that involvement.

More to the point of the main issue:

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

Specifically, be mindful of times when you are being affected by anger or favor. Experience these conditions, reflect without judgment, and carry on.

It is an interesting question to me whether it's absolutely clear that we (as humans) should wish to be totally unaffected by anger or favor, as I don't think that it's as direct an analysis to say that these **necessarily** imply weakness in the human context. My reading of the situation of the gods is that the intermundia and the gods' control over it allows them to experience totally uninterrupted pleasure, without any mixture of pain, and therefore it would imply weakness in them inconsistent with their nature if they experienced gratitude or anger.

With us as humans, however, our nature requires that we participate in life and we're naturally going to run into experiences that can (and should!) generate anger and gratitude. We need to respond appropriately and not let things go further than they should, but I doubt it really makes sense to think about all anger or gratitude as signifying weakness in humans. To take such a position would probably pretty much constitute the essence of Stoicism, wouldn't it?

In fact, in DL there is the saying that the wise man will experience more deeply than others, and this will not hinder his wisdom (if I recall correctly).

So this is a good exercise but we probably need to point out this kind of thing at the very beginning of it.