

The Garden Then -- and the Garden Now

Post by "Kalosyni" of April 25, 2022 at 8:07 AM

We can only imagine what things might have been like back in the time of Epicurus. And now here we are, only in the beginning stages of imagining and creating an Epicurean Philosophy Garden. The current task has many challenges, but we must continue to press forward. We have this little corner of cyberspace in which to build our online Garden, and from this we can move out into the world to create something even more pleasurable.

Last night, feeling some ability to write...first a quote of some study material and then some of my thoughts follow:

The Garden as Refuge

Quote:

"I grant that although mental pleasure brings us joy and mental pain brings us trouble, yet each feeling takes its rise in the body and is dependent on the body, though it does not follow that the pleasures and pains of the mind do not greatly surpass those of the body. With the body indeed we can perceive only what is present to us at the moment, but with the mind the past and future also. For granting that we feel just as great pain when our body is in pain, still mental pain may be very greatly intensified if we imagine some everlasting and unbounded evil to be menacing us. And we may apply the same argument to pleasure, so that it is increased by the absence of such fears."

--Torquatus section, from Cicero's "On Ends"

Let us imagine the community of philosophers at the time of Epicurus. It most likely was not like a commune, but rather more like a daily meeting place. Everyone was fairly certain that they would see their fellow Epicurean students on a regular basis, and perhaps on a daily basis. This anticipation for the comradery was a kind of pleasure in itself. There also was the sense of near certitude that Epicurus the teacher would also be present, and his guiding words would bring new insights. All this would create a sense of community, and a sense of refuge and reliance on each other's friendships, as well as the enjoyment of on-going discussions.

In this way, going to the Garden itself was a kind of medicine, as each person could count on the sense of friendship and engagement that could daily be found within it's gates. So the followers of Epicurus were freed from the fear of abandonment and the fear of loneliness, and freed from the anxiety of uncertainty as to when next they might see their friends, for they knew they would easily and soon renew their joy of their shared presence, happy discussions,

and shared mutual worldviews.

I can imagine the following being words of a student back in the time of Epicurus:

What primordial urges we hide within ourselves, and deny their very existence. Our natural humanity has this tender craving for friendship, and now here we can come to find a refuge and a medicine to satisfy our long-lasting thirst. And some may feel this more strongly than others. This feeling is difficult to describe, but reflected in the very nature of infants and animals. Just as the helpless infant continually seeks for the face of its mother to feel safe and secure, and just as the loyal dog wines to be reunited to the presence of its owner, so too within our own hearts we hear that secret hidden calling to be with those we love, and we feel a yearning for our fellow students, and most of all for our great teacher Epicurus.

I invite anyone to share thoughts, reactions, ideas, Epicurean quotes, art, etc. that come up regarding this 😊

Post by “Cassius” of April 25, 2022 at 8:48 AM

In addition to that we need a section on

The Garden As Prep School

Today we go through phases in life in which we go locally to school, and then go away to college (in some cases), all with the knowledge and intent that we are preparing for life in the larger world.

We form and take with us many friendships with fellow students and teachers, and many of those last the rest of our lives. But we never should lose sight that the schooling is a preparatory phase that will not last forever, and that our reason for being their is to learn how to stand on our own feet and form our own families and stable communities.

The professors and the staff of the "College" do have a longer-lasting relationship that turns out to be weekly or daily and is open ended as to time, and some of the students will even be incorporated into the College staff and instructors.

But everyone keeps a clear eye on the goal that for most this is a preparatory phase, abs that the goal of happy living for the community requires that its mission be understood and respected, so that each fulfills his or her appropriate role.

Just like in AFDiA the character of Hedeia had to be saved from the storm, it's not in the nature of life that every individual can live and act as if there are no outside threats to their continued happiness.

It may or may not take a village to raise a child, but it takes a community to support the individual in a world where there are many organized opponents who are not interested in our happiness, and who in fact see it as a threat.

The Garden as a Refuge complements and supports the role of the Garden as a School, and there are other roles that are necessary as well. But none of these roles stand alone, and if we focus on one aspect exclusively we are like Polyaeus spending all his time on his diagrams while the rest of life passes him by and smashes those diagrams.

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 25, 2022 at 9:24 AM

Yes, the "Garden as Prep School" is another good take on things.

Dixen Clay in "The Athenian Garden" writes:

Quote

Epicurus' Garden was not a school. Seneca had it right when he commented: 'it was not the school of Epicurus that made Metrodorus, Hermarchus and Polyaeus great men but their shared life'.

Just because there is not yet an "Epicurean Garden as Refuge" in existence now, doesn't mean that I or someone else can't create one.

I am in a transitional phase in my life, but eventually I will move to a location where I can and must create something for myself (and for others). Since I want to surround myself with people of like-minded philosophical worldview -- as well as be free from and safe from my family and their guilt/fearful "Nothing but the blood of Jesus" ways of thinking.

At 51 years of age, I have no spouse, and do not have my own children, so that is also why I want to create a philosophy Garden. I am all alone, while everyone else is partnered up already. The effects of Covid have further insulated people into small family units. People are very busy with their work, and spouse and children, and have very little free time for friends, let alone making new friends.

My own possible idea for the future -- perhaps it could be an "Epicurean Bed and Breakfast" where people can come, stay, and study in the library, and enjoy the outdoors (perhaps a rose

garden) - advertized on online on airbnb for a good nightly rate -- but it would be free for good friends to come and visit 😊

Post by "Cassius" of April 25, 2022 at 10:41 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

My own possible idea for the future -- perhaps it could be an "Epicurean Bed and Breakfast" where people can come, stay, and study in the library, and enjoy the outdoors (perhaps a rose garden) - advertized on online on airbnb for a good nightly rate -- but it would be free for good friends to come and visit

That is not a bad idea at all!

Post by "Cassius" of April 25, 2022 at 11:01 AM

And that is an interesting quote from both Disken Clay and Seneca:

Quote

Quote Epicurus' Garden was not a school. Seneca had it right when he commented: 'it was not the school of Epicurus that made Metrodorus, Hermarchus and Polyaenus great men but their shared life'.

I don't think anyone seriously doubts that a "school" was a major component of what Epicurus was doing. Even so, the statement that "it was not the "school" of Epicurus (which I would interpret as "the book learning") that made those men great" is probably true figuratively, f not exactly literally.

I've read several of Diskin Clay's articles and found that he was a great writer but given to colorful wording. I remember one thing that has always stuck with me about him. I would never have suspected that his Article "Epicurus' Last Will and Testament" regardless of the title, is largely devoted to a discussion of Epicurus' elemental physics. Much more than being focused on the will itself, it contains a detailed treatment of what much have been included in the book on the "Twelve Fundamentals." After I finally found that, almost by accident, I stopped putting too much stock in the titles that Clay chose for his writing. Apparently the double (or multiple) meanings of the title was a play on Epicurus' physics being his true "last will and testament."

Post by “Godfrey” of April 25, 2022 at 1:01 PM

The Epicurean B&B is a great idea and would probably attract people who never heard of Epicurus or think he was a foodie. This would provide a "teachable moment" by creating an environment to introduce them to the real Epicurus through the library, garden &c.

This would also work with a cafe and similar establishments.

Post by “Cassius” of April 25, 2022 at 4:40 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

This would also work with a cafe and similar establishments.

Yes I agree that there are many options that could be made to work. I joke in mentioning "nudist colony" or something like that, but the real formula would likely be something entertaining that doesn't cost a lot of money to engage in but can still blend physical with mental pleasures. Not that "nudist colony" is a good example, but depending on the geography of the location there are probably lots of variations on group activities that can be conducted without investing a lot of money.

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 25, 2022 at 5:16 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Yes I agree that there are many options that could be made to work. I joke in mentioning "nudist colony"

I would say that not so much a nudist colony, but rather a "Clothing Optional Resort" 😄

After I write my best seller on Epicurean Philosophy, I could travel to Palm Springs (or probably they have them in Florida) and teach philosophy seminars -- that is, when I need a break from my "Epicurean Garden Bed and Breakfast"



(Sometimes brainstorming ideas get a bit carried away, lol, but that is how the best ideas happen, when you just let the creativity flow).

Post by “Cassius” of April 25, 2022 at 6:34 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

(Sometimes brainstorming ideas get a bit carried away, lol, but that is how the best ideas happen, when you just let the creativity flow).

Yes exactly. It's too bad the Aristotelians trademarked the term "peripatetics" because a "walking group" might well fit the bill as a free and healthful activity that could be engaged in as a group and still combine philosophy. Maybe something like meeting at an appointed time at a park, then having a brief talk, then walking together.

(I am afraid my age is showing that "walking" sounds like more fun and more practical than a nudist colony 😊)

Post by “Pacatus” of May 2, 2022 at 2:21 PM

I am far too much a natural introvert (which I embrace, after years of living a -- for me -- deeply stressful extroverted life, especially my work-life: work that I was good at, but which took a toll in both physical health and any mental serenity) to "run" an Epicurean anything. Or enjoy more than a brief visit to even "the sweetest kind" of bed and breakfast. But I can see that it could be both a noble and a pleasurable venture.

(And I'm w Cassius on the nudist colony!).

Post by “DavidN” of July 20, 2022 at 3:06 AM

My plan is and has been to, if economic conditions remain favorable, buy land back home and build a homestead that I can share with my friends. Modeled after the Borsodi and Nearing homesteads, working the land half the day and spending the later half of the day in contemplation, discourse, writing or enjoying time with friends and family. With a few extra cabins to rent to tourists and students.