

The Three Moĩrai

Post by “TauPhi” of October 6, 2024 at 7:02 PM

Quote

'Destiny, which some introduce as sovereign over all things, he laughs to scorn, affirming rather that some things happen of necessity, others by chance, others through our own agency. For he sees that necessity destroys responsibility and that chance or fortune is inconstant; whereas our own actions are free, and it is to them that praise and blame naturally attach.' [Letter to Menoecus, 133]

Recently, this fragment has caught my attention as it made me think about The Three Sisters of Fate for some reason. I never paid too much attention to them before, but this time I started to see them in more favourable light. I started to play with the idea of the Moirai as allegories for foundations on which our lives happen instead of a simple idea of our lives being determined by the Fates.

Let's call our theatre 'the Universe'. Atropos (Ἄτροπος) - The Sister of Necessity, the Inevitable, builds the theatre and sets universal laws which are not to be crossed, bent or dismissed. Theatre 'The Universe' is where everything is. Next comes Lachesis (Λάχεσις) - The Sister of Distribution, the Alloter. She builds the stage for our play called 'The Life'. She gives us our chances - our genes, health, environment where we operate etc. Finally, Clotho (Κλωθώ) - The Sister of Choice, the Spinner. She weaves the thread of our lives. She employees us as actors in 'The Life' play where we make the choices which are ours despite the fact that they are limited by the chances and necessities of the stage and the theatre.

Epicurus tells us to laugh at the idea of The Three Moĩrai literal existance (*[...] sovereign over all things, he laughs to scorn [...]*) and treats the myth as the myths should be treated - as allegories (*[...] affirming rather that some things happen of necessity, others by chance, others through our own agency. [...]*). This is one of the reasons I find Epicurus' words attractive. He basically says: Dude, stop with this silly business of putting your life in the hands of imaginary builders, scenographers and booking agents and use what you have to be a good actor in the 'The Life' staged in 'The Universe'.

BTW, this post was inspired by the latest [Pacatus](#) poem 'Way of the Seasons'. I love all of it but the 'fate' part is absolutely brilliant.

Post by “Matteng” of October 7, 2024 at 4:01 PM

For me it is important that I can make decision and am a agent. Because I see what direction wise and not so wise decisions can lead and that the world is more complex and creates steadily new causes than the abstract words "cause/effect" let assume.

Searching on youtube the mainstreams says we have no "free will" (what depends on definition). Here is defense but I know this can be an endless debate:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nh1Z3UTobrY>

Post by "Cassius" of October 8, 2024 at 12:50 PM

Just started watching that video Matting and may not be able to finish it for a while, but this looks like a very good video, so thank you!

Post by "Cassius" of October 8, 2024 at 1:22 PM

[Quote from Matteng](#)

Here is defense but I know this can be an endless debate:

A quick additional comment:

After about 15 minutes I wasn't able (for now) to continue. You are right a hundred times over that "this can be an endless debate." For those who find it helpful to go down the rabbit hole, this looks like it could possibly be a very good video. It's definitely well crafted.

But I can't help but throw up my hands and think that this is another example of a rabbit hole that has no happy ending for those who go choose to follow it down into its depths, no matter what side of the debate you are on. In the end, it makes sense to me that we have to accept at face value what the senses, anticipations, and feelings provide to us, and it seems to me that at the very least these faculties tell me that there are at least some times when "I could have acted differently." I may not be able to trace back down to the movement of particular atoms through particular locations of void what is happening to make me sense this, but that's just another example of how there can be truths at the micro level, and separate truths at the macro level, and that neither level has a monopoly on truth.

As a practical matter it seems to me that Epicurus was right that it would be impossible for us to live happily if we did not organize our lives as if we are confident that we have some amount of free agency. Yes it's possible to take the opposite position, just like it is possible to take varying positions on many philosophical issues, but we all have to make our choices about what we choose to believe, and get on with life. Having confidence that we have some amount of free will makes the most sense to me consistent with the evidence and reasoning that I can grasp. Snow is white, and honey is sweet, and it appears to me that I have free will. That has to be good enough and I judge it to be good enough - at least for me.

Post by “Patrikios” of October 8, 2024 at 7:29 PM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

Clotho (Κλωθώ) - The Sister of Choice, the Spinner. She weaves the thread of our lives. She employs us as actors in 'The Life' play where we make the choices which are ours despite the fact that they are limited by the chances and necessities of the stage and the theatre.

I like this idea of the “thread of life” as a metaphor to view our journey through life. Seeing the 3 sides of the Moirai, makes sense to me in better understanding our roles & responsibilities in Life. As I understand, Epicurus tells us to learn from Devine Nature how all 3 of these facets work to achieve a balanced, happy life. In other words, by recognizing that necessity and chance do occur in everyday life, we should also recognize that our free will is not prevented by them, but we can prudently evaluate the opportunities and obstacles from those two sisters. Then we can exercise our free will to choose the best path for our continued journey steps.

Post by “Pacatus” of October 9, 2024 at 5:01 PM

“As a practical matter it seems to me that Epicurus was right that it would be impossible for us to live happily if we did not organize our lives as if we are confident that we have some amount of free agency. ... That has to be good enough and I judge it to be good enough - at least for me.”

- [Cassius](#) post #4 above.

Yes. And the fact that our agency / ability to choose may be constrained by circumstances or our own abilities at any given moment is no refutation.

Even under a regime of strict determination, that very regime, it seems to me, includes for us the near-universal perception that we have such agency - and the practical necessity that we behave accordingly in order to live happily.

Post by “Patrikios” of October 10, 2024 at 1:58 PM

[Quote from Pacatus](#)

“As a practical matter it seems to me that Epicurus was right that it would be impossible for us to live happily if we did not organize our lives as if we are confident that we have some amount of free agency. ... That has to be good enough and I judge it to be good enough - at least for me.”

- [Cassius](#) post #4 above.

[Cassius](#) Your commentary is quite timely, especially for those of us making decisions related to the vagaries of storms & hurricanes.

First, my wife & I are back home safely Thursday morning on the bay, after riding out Milton 6 miles inland on west coast of FL with strong winds & rain. Yet the stillness we experienced last night standing outside during the Eye of the Storm, brought a few moments of tranquility from the wind noise. The Eye also let us know to expect the stronger winds as the back wall of winds hit a few minutes later last night.

Second, we are fortunate to have benefits of science that enables us to organize our lives, track the storm better and make prudent decisions to deal with the necessity of shelter, food & water; while accepting nature’s vagaries of chance, especially with such a powerful storm (wind speeds & direction, rainfall amounts).

Thirdly, according to these principles of Epicurus, we can choose to re-organize our lives prudently to live happily & harmoniously with some new realities of nature, while not attributing the good or bad effects of such natural events to any gods.

Again I appreciate the relevancy of these Epicurean Friends dialogues. ☐☐

Post by “Cassius” of October 10, 2024 at 3:02 PM

[Quote from Patrikios](#)

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Great to hear you are ok and exactly right, Patrikios! Studying these things helps us see that "the gods" aren't going to come to our assistance, that we have to look out for ourselves, that we have to rely on the senses and reason and not wishful thinking and pure abstractions, etc etc etc!

By they way do you have the "quote" function working now?

Post by “Patrikios” of October 10, 2024 at 3:05 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

By they way do you have the "quote" function working now?

