

Considering Whether Epicurus Taught Both Exoteric and Esoteric Truths

Post by “Cassius” of May 1, 2025 at 5:33 PM

Last night in our discussion an interesting topic came up that deserves to be memorialized here. Bryan mentioned that in the Diskin Clay article "Epicurus' Last Will and Testament" that Clay argued that despite Epicurus being devoted to clarity, there amounts to what is an exoteric truth in Epicurean philosophy that is not readily seen on the surface.

The core of the point is that even (or especially) when talking with his students, Epicurus is presuming that the reader or listener will understand the fundamental premises of the philosophy and be able to apply them to understand what Epicurus means, for example, by "pleasure is the absence of pain," or that "[death is nothing to us](#)."

In other words, if the reader or listener does not familiarize himself with the fundamentals of the philosophy, it is very easy to totally misunderstand the thrust of Epicurus' position.

I'm posting this as a conversation starter to come back to, because I don't remember Clay's specific argument, but I think this is a point that would be very valuable to expand on because it is so important to explain to new readers of Epicurus.