

The Tetrpharmakon - Sound Epicurean Doctrine, or Oversimplification?

Post by "Don" of December 6, 2020 at 7:09 PM

[Admin note: This discussion began as a response by Don to a comment made by Charles in this Lucretius Today podcast thread: [RE: Episode Forty-Seven - Death is Nothing To Us](#) . It deserves to stand alone, so was cut from there and placed here. The thread now shows as started by Godfrey due to the way it was moved, but this post by Don was in fact the thread-starter.]

In light of this week's episode, I have to stand up for the Tetrpharmakos. I don't expect to change Charles's mind 😊 but I felt compelled to say at least my two cents in support of the 4-fold Medicine.

Personally, I find the Tetrpharmakos to be a satisfying direct link back to the classical Epicureans. I haven't been able to determine if Philodemus was pro or con regarding the Tetrpharmakos, but I know it's quoted in the ancient source. That appeals to me. And *some* Epicureans were using it for sure.

I also don't see it as an evangelizing tool but rather as a succinct "creed" encapsulating key points of Epicurus's philosophy.

To work through the four lines:

Ἄφοβον ὁ θεός,

Aphobon ho theos

(A+phobon > English phobia)

"The god causes no fear" or "We have nothing to fear from the gods."

Why? See PD1.

ἀνύποπτον ὁ θάνατος

Anuropton ho thanatos

ἀνύποπτον carries the idea of "without suspicion" or "free from risk" We should approach death (thanatos) without suspicion since it is free from risk. See PD2 and other writings of Epicurus.

καὶ τάγαθὸν μὲν εὐκτῆτον,

kai t'agathon men euktēton,

Kai ...Men = and...on the one hand, ...

τάγαθόν is The (Highest) Good which is pleasure.

εὐκτῆτον means "easy to procure" but this refers to the fact that pleasure is readily at hand if we acknowledge it. Additionally, the necessary and natural desires are "easy to procure."

τὸ δὲ δεινὸν εὐεκκαρτέρητον

to de deinon euekkarterēton.

de = on the other hand..

to deinon = The Terrible, in contrast to The Good, = pain (**deinon** > dinosaur)

"Pain" can be "easily endured" or "easily endured with patience." Why? Because PD4.