

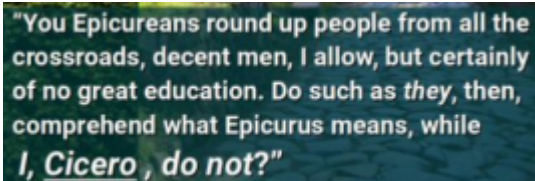
# Tactical Question for the Group Re Terminology In Discussing Reason and Logic

Post by "Cassius" of January 22, 2021 at 7:39 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

I do not think he would want to exclude intelligent scientists from his Garden.

I completely agree. Your next sentence that they might exclude themselves though seems more likely to be a problem, if Cicero was correct, and on this point I bet he was:



"You Epicureans round up people from all the crossroads, decent men, I allow, but certainly of no great education. Do such as they, then, comprehend what Epicurus means, while I, Cicero, do not?"

[Quote from Elayne](#)

If no one had ever made any further observations, then it would be understandable to take your position

The main point I would leave this with for now is that I think you and I are mainly having a terminology debate, but beneath the surface of that debate lies the deeper issues that are more clear when reviewing what Frances Wright wrote. It's not you who I have the big difference with as much as it is Frances Wright and her "observation is everything" approach that is [very explicitly stated here](#). She's representing that as an Epicurean philosophy and we need to decide whether she's right about that or not.

My tentative conclusion about Frances Wright is that her position on this issue was wrong, and that this is the reason, more than anything else, why she seems to have essentially dropped the subject of Epicurus for the rest of her life and devoted herself to pure local politics. I won't argue that her decision was wrong for her, because if she got the most enjoyment out of politics then it isn't appropriate for me to second-guess that, but I can easily see how her views led her to conclude that she had gotten all she was ever going to get out of Epicurus and to move on to something else.

I think the issues underlying this question are very important to the future growth of a real "Epicurean community" in the future. The reason I titled this thread as "tactical" is that I don't think we have been clear enough about a definite set of principles about "what it means to be an Epicurean." Most of the time the public discussion on Facebook and similar places has been

focused on discussion of happiness and "pleasure as the goal" that everyone can interpret the way they want to. As a result the people we attract on Facebook or in local meetup efforts are often thinking we're just going to be attending some kind of self-help psychology group for the purpose of helping them de-stress in addition to their Yoga and/or their Prozac.

That is where I think we have to get over this current issue, because it is essentially the issue of dogmatism that has caused several divisions in our efforts in the past. The issue is somewhat like - "Can we say for sure that anything important is definitely "known" about the universe, about life after death, or the existence of gods?"

If we follow the Frances Wright line and say "everything is observation," that leaves those big-picture questions open, and many people will feel tricked. If we were to invite people to a meeting and then spent our time talking about eternity, infinity, atoms, nothing from nothing, and the like, then those people will feel like they are in the wrong place, as that is not at all what they came to hear. I would say maybe as much as 80% of the Facebook group, or more, fits that category.

So I think we have to start being more clear, and more "dogmatic" that Epicurus held to a certain set of principles that remain fundamentally valid. Sure I agree that many of the physics details need to be updated, but I am personally convinced that the large conclusions (eternality, infinity, absence of infinite divisibility, role of the senses and reason, life throughout the universe, responses to Platonic arguments against pleasure, responses to Parmenides on motion, etc.) are still very valid and at the very least worth talking about as reasonable solutions to these questions.

If you follow Frances Wright's reasoning, all of the physics and "answers to essential questions about the universe" are essentially out the window, and you do in fact become basically a self-help psychology group with just a different slant on pleasure and pain.

That's why I think the Frances Wright perspective has to be cleared up before we can move to a next level of engagement. We'll constantly run into the disappointment I mentioned if we don't. We've actually been pretty consistent over the last six months in holding regular Skype discussions, but until we reach some conclusions about the Frances Wright perspective, we wouldn't even be able to agree on topics for a conference.

Would the topics for a live conference be:

(1) the pleasure of music (2) the pleasure of smooth motion, (3) the pleasure of food, and (4) why pleasure is more important than logic and reason?

Or would the topics be:

(1) the universe was not created by a supernatural god but is eternal, (2) the universe is infinite in space so there is no room for a supernatural god, (3) matter cannot be divided forever, and the elemental particles are the source of stability and repeatability, (4) he who says he knows nothing is a trifler and perverse, and (5) Epicurean logic and reasoning are based on evidence

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1845-tactical-question-for-the-group-re-terminology-in-discussing-reason-and-logic/?postID=10830#post10830>

from the components of the canon, which is why it is the best kind.

Frances Wright seems to have been one of the most brilliant writers on Epicurus in the last 500 years, yet in the end she dropped away from it, so I think there important lessons to be learned from this.