

Elena Nicoli - An Excellent Presentation On Epicurean Pleasure

Post by "Eoghan Gardiner" of May 7, 2018 at 9:56 AM

"It turns out that embracing Hedonism and Epicureanism may be the best, and the kindest thing we can do for ourselves". I am beginning to agree with this, she did a very good presentation and Cassius your questions are exactly the ones which would be asked my audience, I am going to try answer some of them as a "neophyte" Epicurean:

All this sounds fine, but why should I accept Epicurus' opinion that a simple life is all I should want out of life? Aren't there more important things than pleasure and pain? Shouldn't I live so that I will go to heaven, and not go to hell? Those things are more important than pleasure and pain aren't they?

1. To an Epicurean there is no life after death. Living is the presence of sensation, everything you do is based on a sensation of some sort (thinking, eating, sleeping) To an Epicurean there is no separation of body and mind they are one in the same when the body shuts down so does the brain.

Haven't we always been taught that nothing good comes easily? Why should the best part of life be easy to obtain? I see people around me suffering and dying in misery and pain all the time. They didn't find a happy life easy to obtain. Doesn't that show that Epicurus was wrong?

2. Things which people pursue in modern society such as excess wealth, power and others opinion have no limit, they can never be sated even for a short time on the contrast things provided by Nature can be gained easily and sated easily such as food, warmth and relaxation. Modern people have a wrong view on what makes them happy.

I seem to hear you saying that avoidance of pain is the highest goal. Are you really saying that? If so, why shouldn't I avoid all pain by killing myself?

3. The highest goal is pleasure. To an Epicurean the best way to avoid pain is to be "full" of pleasure (and I would explain the full cup here)

Ok, we won't go to extremes like killing ourselves, After all, moderation in all things, right? But I hear you saying that the simplest life is the best. If I really want the best life, shouldn't I go ONLY for bread, water, and a cave to get out of the weather? That would be the purest application of Epicurus, wouldn't it?

4. Epicureans aren't ascetics, bread and water can easily be attained and are an easy pleasure to get (of course in modern times there are a lot more easily got foods) but this doesn't mean

that we can't partake in other pleasures, in fact we definitely should but just remember that bread and water are always there, if other pleasures can't be got.

did I hear you say that we should never want power? I live in a pretty bad neighborhood, and the people in the country next door are talking about invading our country. Right about now I would really like the power to put the criminals in jail and the power to stop the invaders before they burn my house. How can that be wrong - but you said I should NEVER seek power?

5. Then I would say it is acceptable, if a rival nation threatens your ability to pursue the true goal of life and wishes to enforce pain on you and your loved ones, then yes get power. The power which Epicurus refers to is power over people, power over the universe or in other words a power which has no true end and can never be sated. This view of power is false as you will never reach pleasure from it because it can never be sated, even for short amount of time.

OK now I hear you saying that "static" pleasure is the best kind of pleasure, and that comes from absence of pain and not from the senses. But then you've also said that static pleasure "feels good." Are you trying to have it both ways? If the best kind of pleasure feels good, then I understand what you mean? But what kind of pleasure is worth having that I can't feel?

6. (I am not sure about this one but I will make an attempt) - To an Epicurean all pleasures must be felt, a static pleasure is where you simply don't have to do anything for it to occur. (perhaps this has something to do with the full cup analogy? I am not sure how to answer this sorry)