

Swerve some luck my way.

Post by “Matthaios” of February 21, 2021 at 7:57 PM

I recently finished the book: "Epicurus, My Master" - by Max Radin

Written in 1949, Max puts himself into the shoes of Titus Pomponius Atticus; a wealthy Roman citizen and proclaimed Epicurean, who according to the author, had been friends with popular Romans such as: Sulla, Antony, Octavian, Cicero, Marius, Brutus, and Cicero etc. The book dives into his mind on how he successfully navigated a crashing Roman world unscathed, all while maintaining friendships with dangerous and opposing factions. There are several thought-provoking quotes from the book that I may make posts about in the future, but the one I am interested in today is around luck/chance. Comparing the quote from the book to some Epicurean quotes, and then my thoughts on it.

"I believe I have directed my life. It would be unspeakably silly for me to say that I have directed it successfully. I have been successful but most of that is due to chance. My wealth was the gift of chance. Doubtless I was more competent in keeping it and in increasing it than other men might have been. But most of the risks that beset it were the results of acts and events with which I had nothing to do, which I could not have prevented or [changed](#). Civil war and accidents, disease and calamities, all these I have known. Other men as wary and as skillful as I was, were destroyed or ruined by them. My success was as much due to chance as the successful resistance of one or two leaves that cling to a tree when a hurricane sweeps through it." - Atticus (Radin)

"The misfortune of the wise is better than the prosperity of the fool."

"Chance seldom interferes with the wise man; his greatest and highest interests have been, are, and will be, directed by reason throughout his whole life."

It seems to me that the author gives much to "chance" as an important part of Atticus's life, all while praising the man's own competence and direction as major factors to his success. How does an Epicurean look at luck and chance in the world? Could the swerve be split into two types for conscious beings, such as "Directed Swerve", the act of for example, purchasing the lottery ticket, versus "Undirected Swerve" (luck/chance), the act of winning. (Natural phenomena is all classified as Undirected Swerve).

Or for another example, the fortune of luck that Epicurus was to be alive during a time of relative safety in Greece, with Alexander expanding battles to the frontiers, rather than being born several years prior during the Peloponnesian War and plague, of which his philosophy may never have taken root.

Seems that the swerve has worked immensely in our favor, without giving credit to Fortuna or Tyche.

I sometimes question my own successes in life. Certainly, I have made been successful due to my own competence and direction, but is my own competence and direction given up to the fortunate mindset I have been given (nature versus nurture) in this life, versus someone who does not have a fortunate mindset (non-Epicureans 😊).

Any thoughts would be appreciated, thank you for taking the time to read, and forgive me if my ideas are noob.