

Epicurean philosophy vs. Stoicism in public popularity

Post by "Cassius" of March 19, 2021 at 7:56 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Which seems to uphold the tenets of KD5. Elayne is not going to purposefully cause pain to others because she takes pleasure in the pleasure of others.

The seed in this comment that has the potential to grow out of proportion is the unqualified "others."

[Quote from Don](#)

Which leads me to ask: What if someone does what the average person would call selfish "morally reprehensible" actions but derives personal pleasure from them?

If in fact, per [PD10](#), he achieves pleasure, then in fact there is nothing to criticize. Where you're going of course is that depending on circumstances "some" other people (those who disagree) can be expected to react negatively. That's a purely practical concern, but an important one.

[Quote from Don](#)

So, it seems to me that Epicureans are still going to act virtuously to the outside observer.

And that's where I think the danger lies. If applied as written, this gives an automatic veto power over your conduct to the unqualified "outside observer" and that would be deferring to an outside force that has no more natural or idealist authority than anything Plato or Moses came up with. Of course in most cases the "outside observer" actually does exist, in distinction from Plato's idealism or Moses' God, which do not exist, so the "outside observer" has to be dealt with.

And that's where Epicurus is in my view very specific as to the core ways to deal with them (and I bet you know what I am about to cite):

Quote

39. The man who has best ordered the element of disquiet arising from external circumstances has made those things that he could akin to himself, and the rest at least not alien; but with all to which he could not do even this, he has refrained from mixing, and has expelled from his life all which it was of advantage to treat thus.

In other words, I think the key is that you do not give unqualified "Others" veto power over the goals you choose for your life. You certainly have a practical problem with those who have political power over you, but there are ways to deal with that too (Cassius Longinus followed one such alternative) and it is generally possible to consider variations on "refraining from mixing" or "expelling from your life" as well.

Absolutely there are practical issues involved in "others" resisting your preferred choices, but there are major distinctions between your family and friends being resistant (and in those cases you have a much heavier concern about THEIR pleasure) as opposed to those who are much more distant from you, about whom you probably have little concern as to their views, and Epicurus is clearly addressing those situations and pointing the way to the response.

As one small example that seems appropriate, if we here in this group did not enforce rules to separate ourselves from the Stoic and Religious majorities, this group would quickly cease to exist. We try to do that in stages, being nice and diplomatic at first to see if such a person can be persuaded to at least our general positions, and become tolerable and productive here, but progressively enforcing the rules of conduct and eventually expelling them entirely when they prove incompatible to our happiness and goals here.

I see that as pretty much exactly what Epicurus was saying about life in general, in which of course it is much harder to accomplish that, but not different in principle.