

Epicurean philosophy vs. Stoicism in public popularity

Post by “Elayne” of March 19, 2021 at 8:09 AM

[Don](#) that's not a qualifier-- it's just a description of what I like to do, not a restraint separate from my pleasure. And yes, it's in the spirit of PD5. Because virtues have no meaning other than as tools for pleasure. It would be weird to remove my awareness of future consequences from actions in the present-- that seems much more convoluted and unnatural to try and live purely for the present moment, at least for me, lol. So that's not a qualifier either. What I like to do is always in the context of my regular brain. Whether my brain is normal or not, I can't say [□].

I disagree strongly about any implied absolute meaning for virtue common to all humans. If Epicurus was saying that, and I don't think he was, he would have been wrong. There can't biologically be one set of behaviors leading to a pleasurable life for every single human. And even for a single human, it's not wise to make any fixed virtue that could override pleasure-- there can be extenuating circumstances, such as the classic murderer asking for your friend's whereabouts. So no virtue like honesty is fixed. Everything is relative to pleasure.

For most of us, natural empathy provides the pro-social pleasure motive. For some, fear of consequences provides the reason to abstain from harming others, which Epicurus mentioned multiple times. However, it is easy to observe that some high functioning low empathy humans have enough financial resources to protect themselves from at least some degree of asocial if not downright anti-social living. And if they have pleasurable lives that way, free from both anxiety and painful punishment, only they can give testimony. It's definitely risky to live outside the typical human virtue preferences, but it can be done. Those are the folks I try to avoid strenuously!

The reason we try to talk them out of it is for our own benefit. As Epicurus said, laws are for the protection of the wise.