

Epicurean philosophy vs. Stoicism in public popularity

Post by "Don" of March 19, 2021 at 10:17 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

It would be weird to remove my awareness of future consequences from actions in the present--

I think it would be weird, too, so I'm curious where you're getting that from what's posted. From my perspective, the "awareness of future consequences" is the heart of any practice of Epicurean philosophy. That's the basis for all choices and rejections: how do actions in the present affect my current and future experience of pleasure.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

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.

So, do you disagree with PD 5 then? Why does Epicurus single out living prudently, morally, and justly if not recognizing them as "virtues" consistent with a pleasurable life across a wide swath of people? These traits lead - by observation - to more pleasurable living. Why wouldn't he endorse them?

[Quote from Elayne](#)

There can't biologically be one set of behaviors leading to a pleasurable life for every single human.

That's just not true. There are any number of behaviors that will consistently and verifiably lead to a more pleasurable life for any organism. Nature gives plenty of examples of behaviors that make an organism "fit" that are applicable across populations. Humans are no exception. I'm not saying every human being is going to have every common behavior, but I think you're going overboard to say there aren't *any* common behaviors that would be conducive to a pleasurable life. A pleasurable life is free from anxiety, want, pain, etc. There are common actions to take to achieve that.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

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.

I don't have any argument with this. I'm not advocating overriding pleasure by virtue. Virtue is **always** in service to pleasure. There isn't any absolute virtue that's followed 100% of the time. Virtuous activity and the degree to which it's carried out is always relative to the situation and context. Stoics would say that. Epicureans would say that. In any case, honesty isn't the appropriate virtue here in your scenario anyway. You're throwing up a red herring. Here the virtuous act is protecting your friend. Anyone who says that being 100% truthful at all times is living in a utopian fantasy.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

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!

I understand your saying "only they can give testimony," but people can convince themselves - or try to convince others - of most anything. I would find it difficult to accept the idea that a misanthropic, antisocial person feels pleasure at their lives. That's a lot of psychological pain to work through. But it's also not my place to worry about them unless I have to interact with them... Which, as you say, it is best to simply avoid them per Epicurus's advice.