

# **New Annual Event - The "Bread And Water Multimedia Award" - Nominations for 2021 Award (to be selected in December) Now Open!**

**Post by "Cassius" of April 27, 2021 at 6:31 AM**

Yes there are aspects of that video, such as the section on the gods, that are relatively well done. And my take on the tone of voice of the narrator is that he is being absolutely sincere in thinking that his presentation is accurate and fair.

But I think the best test of whether someone is getting so immersed in the "natural / necessary" "static / moving," "vain" and other such words that can no longer see the forest for all the trees is where they end up after the exercise.

And this video employs every one of the key words in the standard way, leading up to the conclusion at about the 20 second mark that **"His philosophy leads much more to asceticism than to indulgence."**

Yes he's right to an extent - that conclusion is exactly what that interpretation does add up to.

Yet there is absolutely no record of any ancient Epicurean, including Epicurus himself, being an ascetic in practice.

If you think about those two simple facts: (1) one way to attribute a series of statements made by Epicurus leads inexorably to asceticism, but also consider (2) there is no evidence that Epicurus or any other ancient Epicurean was an ascetic in real life, something doesn't add up, and something is wrong in one of those two observations.

Either (1) Epicurus and his key followers were among the biggest and most successful hypocrites who ever walked the face of the earth, or (2) what Epicurus and his followers taught was understood in the ancient world by those who knew them as NOT in fact adding up to asceticism.

Further, not only is there no record of an ancient Epicurean blazing new trails or techniques in asceticism, but that the common criticism of Epicureans in the ancient world was that they were IN FACT living lives of indulgence and association with pleasures - activities that were distinctly NOT limited to "necessaries" such as bread and water. So far as I can tell, there is nothing about the Villa of the Papyri that indicates that it was intended to simulate living in a cave or on bread and water, and as we've discussed before, Epicurus' will with its significant list of material possessions - including slaves - does not indicate a tremendous amount of asceticism.

In the face of these contradictions it has always seemed to me that people would be looking to reconcile them, and if they were interested in gaining wisdom from Epicurus (rather than techniques for massive hypocrisy) they would look to reconcile them in a way that brings practice and theory into harmony. They would look for a way to understand the theory in a way that would explain their actual lifestyle.

But that's not what they do at all, and I think the answer why is clear: They are starting with the presumption, which is in fact not only the majority but also almost unanimous among all other philosophies, that "virtue" is the goal and living an "ascetic" life is worthy and desirable. For that reason they look for the interpretation of Epicurus that fits their preconceived notions of what he "should" have been teaching.

They don't care to reconcile the actual lifestyles with the theory, or explain why their result would have Epicurus seemingly invert the normal meaning of words, because what they care about is promoting their theory of asceticism and virtue as the best life, and that's really all that matters to them. And so much the better, even if it requires sacrificing their own credibility (ignoring clear facts and presenting a counterintuitive narrative results in the greatest philosopher of pleasure in world history being an ascetic?), when the result they achieve is the total neutering and suppression of the ideas of their greatest philosophical opponent.