

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

Post by "Don" of April 27, 2021 at 2:20 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

And I think that "IF" is the key. It's not necessary; Epicurus knows it's not necessary; we know it's not necessary; everyone knows it's not necessary -- so why say something that everyone knows to the point of the observation being trite?

If we find ourselves in a situation where we were to only have just enough food to satisfy our hunger, we can still find pleasure. I don't think it's trite at all to make that observation. It's not necessary to be an ascetic. Firmly agree with that. But we don't need opulence to find pleasure. If we have access to opulence, that's great! Enjoy!! Saying "everyone knows" doesn't mean everyone acknowledges or practices what they know as "common sense." It is one of the jobs of the philosopher - especially one as dedicated to making the lives of everyone more pleasurable as Epicurus did - to hold up a mirror to people to get them to examine how they are living their lives.

Seneca says that Epicurus "used to observe stated intervals" where he would sparingly eat to test how much was necessary to satiate his hunger ****as an experiment****. This is most likely the genesis of the whole bread and water "myth."

Pointing out "childish" common sense strategies doesn't rule out the opportunity to declare and defend profound philosophical truths. Epicurus was fighting on two fronts: arguing against the Platonists etc al one the one hand, and providing practical guidance for everyday life to common people on the other.

The Letter to Menoikeus isn't meant to be a philosophical treatise arguing against Plato but a practical summary of ethical teachings to his student. I agree it's not meant as a step-by-step "[to-do list](#)" but it's not meant to be deciphered like some sort of philosophical code either. Epicurus's straightforward, clear writing style is meant to say what he meant. I agree people try to extrapolate principles into absolutes, and I don't think Epicurus was saying live in a cave. But I do think he encouraged people to examine how they were living their lives and if what they were doing actually brought pleasure. The categories were a helpful shorthand to jump start that examination.