Jefferson, Epicurus, and "The Constitution Is Not A Suicide Pact"

Post by “Cassius” of September 6, 2018 at 5:12 PM

I do not think this strays too close to the line of contemporary politics for this group, but I have what I think is a good reminder of the application of the last ten Doctrines of Epicurus.

Many of you (the Americans, anyway) may have heard the phrase "The Constitution is not a suicide pact." That comes from a 1949 Supreme Court case on free speech by a justice who is long forgotten, but here is the same sentiment stated in very clear terms by the only president who ever declared himself to be an Epicurean, Thomas Jefferson.

Yes it has "political" application, but do you see how it is a direct slap in the face of Stoicism and Platonism and all the "isms" which allege there to be some immutable law and "virtue" for all people at all times and all places?

When the time comes for action, an Epicurean is not limited by false devotion to the supposed "laws" of god or of men. And in the great crisis of his own life, even a Platonist like Cicero came to the same conclusion, as he executed the Catalinian conspirators and cheered on Cassius in the revolution against Caesar. Epicurean philosophy doesn't guarantee us success in life, but it frees us from the false blinders that many seek to impose on us.

https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-03-02-0060