

# Latest Catherine Wilson Article: "Why Epicureanism, Not Stoicism, Is the Philosophy We Need Now"

Post by "Cassius" of January 7, 2022 at 5:53 AM

Well after reading the rest I don't see too much reason to revise my prior opinion or add to it too much. As I see it she largely continues in the same vein, deserving some praise and some caution.

For example, I think I know the section in Lucretius that supports this, but I would not say that this is really true of the big picture of the philosophy: "According to Epicurus, cold, hunger and illness are the main causes of human misery, but we are liable to other forms of suffering and deprivation."

Same here: These are largely true as well, but doesn't the writing seem at least just a little "overbroad"?

*"Keep your worldly ambitions modest, he advised. Unrequited love, he recognised, is terrible to endure, as are the torments of jealousy, so keep away from anyone threatening to make you miserable before you are in over your head.*

Here's another example where I bet [Martin](#) would agree with me:

"The Epicureans thought this was wicked nonsense, and their later followers, especially Thomas Hobbes, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx, agreed." Yes each of these had certain good things to say about Epicurus (or at least I think they did). But is it really a good idea to call them "later followers" of Epicurus - *especially Karl Marx*? If you're trying to write a generalist article encouraging interest in Epicurus, do you really want to do that? Maybe in the New Statesman, I suppose (not really familiar with exactly where that is on the political spectrum, but it's somewhere on the left so maybe that explains her choice.)

Also, I think we've previously here on the forum confronted the bliss drug issue, possibly in discussing prior Wilson references to it, and come to the same criticism that I would restate here: She's not describing this exactly right:

## Quote

An important objection to regarding pleasure as the sole human good, and pain as the only true evil, is that few of us would choose to take a "bliss drug" that kept us in a permanent and passive state of delight, unaware of our hurts. Most would rather experience hardships, ups and downs, and the pains of off-and-on deprivation that

keep our appetites sharp. The Epicurean can agree entirely. A bliss drug would not be a source of real pleasure because it would wipe out experience. Blissed out, we would not be encountering the world as it is, but a distorted world in which the causes of physical and psychological pleasure as well as pain were obscured.

And the problem here is again that Wilson seems to like to talk in terms of "real pleasure" which I think is a major error in terminology. Again, pleasure is pleasure and pain is pain, and the feeling is very difficult to the point of impossible to "mistake" -- the issue is that some pleasures are not to be chosen because they lead to great pain later, and vice versa. IF IN FACT A BLISS DRUG WORKED THEN AN EPICUREAN WOULD CHOOSE IT! In fact that's largely what Epicurean philosophy is, and why we use the "Tetrapharmakon" analogy -- Epicurean philosophy is medicine for the soul and for the human life and helps us live more happily and less painfully.

It's difficult to understand why Wilson does not seem to want to embrace this point, and make it clearly, except that her articles are generally weighted with politics and she seems to want to appeal to a particular political viewpoint more than anything else. I see this as a significant hazard in being too consumed with politics and that's part of our "no-politics" rule here, though not our primary reason for it.