

An Epicurean Understanding of Valentine's Day: Love, Romance, and Free-will

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2022 at 4:48 PM

And I think there Matt you are introducing the very difficult but very important issue of cultural and gender rules and norms that vary greatly over time. I don't need to be more specific than to note that there is fierce disagreement over whether there is a single correct attitude toward these topics -- whether our current societal norms in 2022 in the West are better or worse than those of 200 BC Athens. We can debate those issues "til kingdom come" and never arrive at a consensus solution.

But the point is that Epicurus was very clear that we should challenge and not accept on authority whether cultural norms are to be accepted by us individually or not. All of us are influenced by prevailing norms, and also we are aware of historical differences, and the possibility that things may change in the future. The reality for us is that we only have one life to live, and we have to make choices in the present as to what will lead to more or less pleasure and pain.

I think if Epicurus were here today he would probably say the same thing now as then: that giving in to cultural norms without examining them and deciding whether we will ultimately be happy that we chose to follow them or not is a very im-prudent method of proceeding.