

Epicurean Worldview, Personal Identity, and Creating Community

Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2022 at 4:34 PM

Just a couple of notes:

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

but a community isn't necessary to see the truth Epicurus had been preaching

It is not necessary, certainly, but it surely is desirable, and there's no reason not to work toward it.

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

Ataraxia, the independence from external events, is actually an extremely important concept in the philosophy, at least according to Hiram (looking at "Tending the Epicurean Garden"!)

Certainly ataraxia - which I would prefer to simply go ahead and translate as "absence of disturbance" is an important concept, just as is absence of pain. It is interesting that you are linking it to "independence from external events" more than the literal absence of disturbance. This is indeed where I would argue that many modern commentators (no need to refer specifically to Hiram) go off the beam and forget that Epicurus had clearly laid down that it is not "absence of disturbance" but pleasure that is the goal of life. We don't need to go into that whole argument here now, but I do think by linking it here you are perhaps giving an example of what I worry about most - which is that tranquility has replaced pleasure as the focus of some in the Epicurean community. Please again let me restate I am not criticising you, SK, but making the observation that in life we have some major options, and whether we pursue pleasure aggressively during the time we have, or whether we accept "tranquility," is a huge question. And yes I state it in terms of "accepting" tranquility because I would argue that it is a major error to think that Epicurus held tranquility or tranquility to be higher than pleasure.

But I am glad you wrote that because again it focuses the issue: Yes we can choose to be "tranquil" as we accept our existing situations (which rings of Stoicism even as I write it). Or we can choose to use the insights of Epicurean philosophy to focus with intensity on pleasure as the goal, the shortness of life as a spur, and the eternity of nothing after death as good reason to "make hay while the sun shines."

You're right in all of your considerations about how a large community is not necessary, and how we can live happily regardless of those circumstances which we can't change. But we CAN change some of our our circumstances - we can certainly work to make more Epicurean friends - and if we don't do that in the name of the "Tranquility" which some commentators urge --- then that would be a great tragedy.

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

No one will simply look at Epicureanism nowadays and think: "Wait, that makes sense!" People are wayyy too absorbed in politics and news and non-natural desires. What I think matters is that you set an example.

People will come. Charismatic personalities, self-assured people always attract friends.

You are absolutely right. The philosophy has been there for thousands of years, it's largely (from the Epicurean point of view) common sense, and yet not very many have chosen to follow it in the open. It's going to take a new generation of opinion leaders coming after us to really kick things into gear. But we can make a start now, and I think we can make significant progress.