"Medicine" of Epicurus: Removing Fear and Finding Freedom

Post by “Eikadistes” of May 31, 2022 at 2:26 PM

> Quote from Kalosyni
>
> I wonder if some kinds of modern therapy or modern psychology can end up being a kind "false medicine"?

I have *Bipolar 1* so paranoia is part of my makeup and many moons ago I discovered a blind spot owned by Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for my condition. At the time, I was in the middle of acknowledging paranoid feelings about a group of people I was calling my friends. My Psy.D. and I worked through exercises that slowly desensitized me to anxiety I felt around groups. I went from a period of being recluse and antisocial to performing onstage.

Still, the strides that I made could not prepare me for the following: **that** group *really did* have ill intentions planned for me, and more than one individual was involved in methodically acting on those ill intentions. "You don't have anything to feel anxious about" as a blanket statement was inadvertently poison, because I needed to hear, "You *may* suffer from irrational paranoia, but, *in this case*, your paranoia is justified and the objects thereof are worthy of suspicion."

Having a trusted friend in my corner was as important as a proper chemical balance. A medical professional can only do so much. It takes the support of a trusted friend to know you well enough to offer nuanced advice. A psychologist, therapist, or counselor can only work with so much. Someone close to you has an invested interest in your health, and (in an era of constant moving and job-switching) is more reliable than a doctor you infrequently see.

Anyway, CBT made it easier for me to go on to tolerate *the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*. What it failed to do was provide direction. In my case, how can I distinguish *justified suspicion* from *unjustified paranoia*? Under a microscope of academic psychology, I seemed to be obsessing over unhealthy thoughts. In a larger context, I was *actually* obsessing over making a critical decision that warranted my anxious behavior.

As a side note, one thing you learn in theatre is that the general anxiety thespians call "first night jitters" is actually a net positive gift from nature. You stop performing as well when you get desensitized to the crowd and stop caring.