

# "Medicine" of Epicurus: Removing Fear and Finding Freedom

Post by "Cassius" of June 1, 2022 at 10:51 AM

Joshua what is Thoreau referring to a "trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken"?

What neighbors and what labors?

This is relevant to something I was considering yesterday. I was re-reading Nietzsche's "Antichrist," and finding myself in agreement with most of it, but with the strong exception of the following "Chapter" 30. The wording here is typically roundabout but to the extent Nietzsche is labeling Epicurus or Epicureanism as "afraid" of pain I think that is absolutely wrong. Nor do I think Epicurus was "extremely susceptible to pain and irritation" or that "touch" was unendurable.... So of course to call Epicurus a "decadent" in these terms I believe to be absolutely incorrect.

That's why I ask about the background of Thoreau's comment..... I definitely see that the accusation Nietzsche raises can be justified in some situations, and I can see the possibility of referring to Hercules' efforts in the wrong way might be a symptom of that. In the Lucretius example, I don't see a motivation of "fear" or "extreme sensitivity" --- I see simple common sense being used to avert mortal danger, and I see Lucretius as praising Epicurus for defeating enemies much more subtle and oppressive than lions. And of course we know that Epicurus said we explicitly sometimes choose pain.

Without knowing Thoreau's comparison however I wonder what Thoreau's point was?

## Der Antichrist

### 30.

*The instinctive hatred of reality:* the consequence of an extreme susceptibility to pain and irritation—so great that merely to be "touched" becomes unendurable, for every sensation is too profound.

*The instinctive exclusion of all aversion, all hostility, all bounds and distances in feeling:* the consequence of an extreme susceptibility to pain and irritation—so great that it senses all resistance, all compulsion to resistance, as unbearable anguish (—that is to say, as *harmful*, as *prohibited* by the instinct of self-preservation), and regards blessedness (joy) as possible only when it is no longer necessary to offer resistance to anybody or anything, however evil or dangerous—love, as the only, as the ultimate possibility of life...

These are the two *physiological realities* upon and out of which the doctrine of salvation has sprung. I call them a sublime super-development of hedonism upon a thoroughly unsalubrious soil. What stands most closely related to them, though with a large admixture of Greek vitality and nerve-force, is epicureanism, the theory of salvation of paganism. Epicurus was a *typical decadent*: I was the first to recognize him.—The fear of pain, even of infinitely slight pain—the end of this *can* be nothing save a *religion of love*...