

Epicureanism and Romantic Love

Post by "Cassius" of June 30, 2022 at 10:20 AM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

The first point I would like to see articulated is that Epicurus' opinions about sex and romance—whatever they turn out to be—are just that; opinions. I'm not very likely to consult a dead philosopher at all on these matters, they being so intimate and so personal, and I am especially uninterested in giving my ear to any High Priest of Epicureanism on what I should do, or what I am allowed to do when it comes to interpersonal relationships.

I agree with that too with this different wording:

Epicurus was a "philosopher." He was not a "Life Coach" or a "Sex Therapist" or a "Psychologist," or a "Psychiatrist" except as we choose to think about applying his general rules to our own specific cases.

All we really know about Epicurus' personal life is that he seemed to spend most of his time in studying nature and engaging in philosophical discussions (battles) over conflicting philosophical ideas. We don't know his specific thoughts on a wide variety of specific situations.

Yes his general philosophical deductions do have applications to specifics, but only in a general way. The thrust of his work was at high levels like:

- There are no supernatural gods or life after death so live like you only live once.
- Pleasure and Pain as feels are in a general sense the real guides to life, not virtue or divinities.
- Think about all the results of your choices, long and short term, and make your decisions so as to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.
- Actions that have a high risk of painful results need to be engaged in very carefully, if you choose to engage in them at all.

I don't think Epicurus meant to be interpreted as being any more specific toward specific people than general "rules of thumb" like that. And it wouldn't make sense for him to try to, because the whole thrust of his worldview is that there is no fate and no hard determinism so everyone has to deal with their own circumstances as best they can.

Even the extended treatment of romantic love in Book Four of Lucretius is really almost just a series of semi-amusing anecdotes which try to impress among people who are intoxicated to be especially careful - not a general rule of "do this" or "don't do that" -- heck the experts can't

even agree if he had a general rule for or against marriage itself, and the best unwinding of that always seems to come down to "it depends."

So I see Epicurus' general advice to be "Be Careful."

He's providing the starting point, but he's NOT telling us to take that info and go sit in a cave. He tells us also to gather friends and talk about things and apply the general rules to life, and that's the kind of thing we can do by looking at modern and specific contexts and help each other analyze things and work together as friends to apply the general rules to the specific problems.