

Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 215

Post by "Cassius" of August 17, 2022 at 10:55 AM

I very much like your train of thought Nate.

I think it bears also on the phantom I am always wanting to fight - the implication that "being satisfied with what we have" leads inexorably to "it's perfectly fine for us to spend our lives in a cave eating bread and water."

The reason it is NOT fine to "live in a cave eating bread and water" is that we have the "instinct" to know that we can do better than that. Given that inbuilt feeling of the "perfect," the idea of us being satisfied with a cave-dwelling life should never even be a temptation to us.

We can at one and the same time understand that (1) living in a cave on bread and water may in fact be appropriate under certain circumstances but also (2) that such circumstances and manner of living is not the norm nor should it be accepted as a norm.

There may be better words than "instinctual" but I am using that to cover the drift of your post and your quotes. We might also be talking about "art" or "archetypes" or other words. But something inside living things that's connected with the way we function doesn't require elaborate logical syllogisms to understand our own natures, and that something helps us "see" or "feel" what kind of things we are capable of and/or can aspire to.

As such I can see this "Epicurean attitude toward divinity" being much more significant in the Epicurean worldview than it is given credit for today. It helps bridge that "Why NOT live in a cave if absence of pain is the highest pleasure?" problem in a way that doesn't rely on Platonic forms, divine intervention, or dry syllogisms.

And if in fact this line of thought such as you are discussing is correct, it's a major issue that needs emphasis and development to help flesh out a truly usable modern understanding of Epicurus.