

Is Epicurean life achievable only for well off?

Post by "Cassius" of September 20, 2022 at 12:03 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I think that it might be good to consider that happiness depends on a certain level of fulfillment of basic necessities. If you don't have the basics (food, shelter, clothing) then you will have a high level of discomfort in life.

This is absolutely correct. Reading it stated in this way, however, reminds me to say things like "What alternative to Epicurean philosophy would be better for someone who doesn't have the basic necessities of life?" Would it be better for a poor person to start praying to supernatural gods? Would it be better for a poor person to start hoping for a better life in heaven after death? Would it be better for a poor person to start believing that there is an ideal statement of what it means to be "a good man" written in the sky somewhere? Or would it be better for a poor person, just like a rich person, to understand that no matter how far they might be from luxury or even the basics at a particular moment, that it is better to understand how the universe does work, and learn to work within the system of nature, rather than trying to avoid the facts of reality?

I would say that even when he was suffering the most at the end of his life, Epicurus was still providing us the best example of the way to live as an Epicurean in the way he faced his last days.

I think it is important to consider that not every person who is "happy" and surrounded by pleasures is by any means an Epicurean, nor is a poor person in the midst of great distress prevented from being an extremely proficient Epicurean. I hate to draw on the old biblical analogies but it is similar to the verse about how everyone who calls on the name of Christ is not necessarily a Christian. There are many political and religious opportunists who succeed in surrounding themselves by pleasure and avoiding pain, at least for a while, but that does not in any proper sense make them an Epicurean. That's one reason the name of the philosophy is best known as "Epicureanism" and not "hedonism."

So I would say that it's not actual success in pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain that makes one a good Epicurean, but understanding the way the world works and doing our best regardless of our circumstances and regardless of results to pursue life in the right way, consistent with what we believe to be the truth about our place in the universe.

Epicurus was in the middle of intense pain when he died, but that intensity of pain in no way made him less of an Epicurean.