

An Epicurean "Sanity Check"

Post by "Cassius" of February 2, 2019 at 11:55 PM

Let's perform a "sanity check" on the thought process of a young Epicurean raised in an Epicurean community:

(1) As soon as I am old enough to recognize the world around me, I see and feel that I, like all other animals, have a strong desire to experience pleasures of all kinds, both immediate and long term;

(2) As I grow older and stronger I see that I can experience numerous and vivid pleasures, and that virtually all of them can be experienced with little or very reasonable payment in pain if I simply use a moderate amount of intelligence. I also learn that I can be confident in facing pain because even if I make a mistake, pain will be manageable if long and short if intense;

(3) As I study my lessons I learn that the feelings I have had from birth are correct, and that in fact in a basic sense only mental and physical pleasure and pain have any real motivating influence on me, and I understand that every moment of my life will ultimately be motivated by pleasure or pain;

(4) As I study my lessons I become fully convinced that there is no god to reward me for willingly accepting pain, and no ideal forms which require me to accept pain in order to live "nobly," as if for some goal which is to me nothing but an abstraction;

(5) As I study further and see people and animals around me die from a variety of causes, I fully accept that the same thing is going to happen to me, and I embrace the knowledge that in the eternity of space and time, I will be conscious and alive for at best a handful of decades, which will seem to go by in an instant;

(6) As I see my friends and parents grow old, and as I study the lessons of my teachers, I no longer doubt that death is literally the absence of feeling, and I know that when I am dead I will never again experience any pleasures of any kind.

(7) So now that I am graduated from my Epicurean education, in the prime of my mental and physical strength of young adulthood, I commit myself to spending the rest of my life in as simple a manner as possible, on bread and water, with a little cheese, as quietly and passively and in as much isolation as I can find - perhaps with a friend or two - but with all of us forswearing any desire for marriage, children, sex, music, art, or ambition to improve ourselves or our community! And if the Persians invade our city, we will hide or surrender, because fighting would certainly disturb our bodies and minds.

Items one through six are clearly documented, uncontradicted by any Epicurean text, and internally consistent with everything known about Epicurean views of the science of nature and of knowledge.

But what about item seven?