

Episode One Hundred Forty-Seven - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 03 - True Opinions And False Opinions About Epicurus

Post by "Kalosyni" of November 8, 2022 at 8:35 AM

Notes of the first half of the podcast:

True Opinions vs False Opinions

1:02 -- We are on chapter 1 and this is for people who haven't read a lot of Epicurus, we are starting at a very general level of the significant aspects - and this is to provide background

2:20 -- False opinion: that Epicurus taught in response to Stoicism.

Truth: Epicurean philosophy was fully developed before Zeno began teaching Stoicism, Epicurus does not come after the Stoics in terms of time. He comes immediately after Plato and Pyrrho. He was reacting against Platonism (ideal forms, absolute truth) and Skepticism (no truth is possible to ever understand and therefore the best we can hope for is tranquility, and to get out of the mind controversies among competing arguments about what is true or false.

3:26 -- Epicurus place in Greek philosophy - a strong rebel against the consensus of other philosophers

4:10 -- How the false opinions arose -- Cicero writing dialogs in which competing schools of philosophy are arguing against each other

5:10 -- What Epicurus was really doing was responding to Plato -- To what extent do we need to be reading Plato in order to understand Epicurus?

6:33 -- Plato's work of [Philebus](#) -- a long discussion of the nature of pleasure

8:18 -- The Epicurean response to Plato. All of philosophy is simply a footnote to Plato (Whitehead). So reading Plato will help you have a better context. According to Martin unless you are going to debate philosophy then it is not necessary to go too deeply in Plato.

11:45 -- On Famous Women -- contains a biography of Leontium

13:50 -- Epicurus was reacting against idealism -- absolute right and wrong that we derive from eternal forms

15:15 -- Epicurus' attitude toward learning -- he was well educated and he was a thinker, very methodical. The false opinion was that he was an enemy of all culture and education, and

rejected all forms of logic. The wise man will not write poetry but will be able to understand it.

17:40 -- possibly a reaction against the way that children were educated in Greece -- the Gymnasium system

19:28 -- the goal of education in ancient Greece was focused on the political, to produce a good citizen and good Greek city-state that would function the most successfully according to their view, bringing the individual into conformity with these predetermined ideas of how the correct state should be and should function, and to create worker bees, soldiers, or conventional "philosopher kings" -- so Epicurus challenged this -- change your course for the correct goal of a happy life (Polyannus example).

22:03 -- Martha Nussbaum presents idea in Therapy of Desire that students in the Epicurean Garden were not allowed to speak up or challenge and they were intimidated into following Epicurus' position -- this is another example of a very wrong attitude. Correct view is that in Epicureanism nothing more important in life than to use your senses and use your reasoning to examine things, to challenge things, to question authority.

22:29 -- Epicurus' goal for himself and his work, moral reformer rebelling against his teachers. False view -- that Epicurus was nothing more than a copy cat, ungrateful to his teachers. Epicurus asked his teacher about chaos, and challenged that (idea claiming that the primordial nature was chaos, but they can't even explain what it is). We are hanging quite a lot onto a very few words of Diogenes Laertius -- Epicurus denied his teachers and claimed to be self-taught, and we don't have this is Epicurus' own words.

26:02 -- the system which he had developed quite early on was sufficient to get him thrown out of town in one instance -- but he had a very devoted spirit of inquiry, and was not willing to settle for bad answers, answers like chaos that have no explanatory power, and from which you can't derive any inferences. So he developed his own system.

26:52 -- His own philosophy was different from what he learned. There were elements from his preceding teachers but he made something different out of it -- and he completely changed such as his response to Democritus and hard determinism.

28:36 -- Would have made sense to use Democritus as a reference for atomism. But we now longer have all of Epicurus books, so can't know if he referred to Democritus. Lucretius mentions Democritus.

29:48 -- When your observations change you modify your conclusions.

30:45 -- Epicurus' role as a systematizer - attempting to build a synthesis and a wide range of thought, a broad system, a worldview from the ground up. False view that he was sloppy and disorganized. Cicero accused Epicurus of not being concerned about definition, and other aspects of logical system building.

33:02 -- Letter to Pythocles, methodology for how you should evaluate competing claims. Study of nature.

34:17 -- the work of writing responses to other philosophers, for example Leontium writing against Theophrastus. An effort to respond to all of the ideas and claims swirling around the Aegean at that time.