

Diving Deep Into The History of The Tetrpharmakon / Tetrpharmakos

Post by "Cassius" of February 7, 2019 at 8:29 AM

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Cassius:

Yes it does have its uses when wielded by the right hands, and it is so well known today that it has to be dealt with regardless of what we might think about it. I wish we had an example of an actual ancient Epicurean using it in context and explaining it from his or her perspective. Many of the passages that seem so tricky I think are perfectly understandable given the right perspective, which they would have had and of which we have been robbed for 2000 years.

[Elli Pensa Cassius](#) my friend, I agree with you ...the "tetrpharmakos" is that kind of schooling as it is for the little children when they are starting the nursery school. We the greeks when we learned the alphabet we sung an old song that goes like this :

Alpha, beta, gamma, delta...

bring all the books,

and a pencil and a paper,

to write all the things,

to write little letters

that are the God's little things. (i.e. the little letters and the little things that we learn at school are derived from god and are ending to the god). 😊

So, that old song we have learned at nursery school stopped to the four letters, as four medicines means in greek the tetrpharmakos. And I wonder now where are the other letters of the greek alphabet ? Where is our alpha and omega that is pleasure inside the tetrpharmakos? It does not exist inside and that old song we sung in nursery school, and in the tetrpharmakos. Sorry guys, but inside wrong hands and the tetrpharmakos is like that old greek song we said in nursery school. That's the whole issue, I suppose. Every little and condensed issue, when you see it reading or hearing and is about the EP, as a honest Epicurean, you have to make it huge, clear, mature, grow, strong and obvious connected it with the real GOAL ! 😊

Cassius:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/712-diving-deep-into-the-history-of-the-tetrpharmakon-tetrpharmakos/?postID=2104#post2104>

The formulation does have its uses, just like these rhymes do. But I think its grossly overused, and mostly by people who have no affinity for a pleasure-based philosophy. In fact, this formulation does not even mention "pleasure" at all, which is probably the main reason it goes down so well with those who interpret Epicurus as consistent with the Stoics.

And one of the best ways I can think to caution people about it is to point out that we have ZERO-NONE-ZERO evidence of any Epicurean from 300 BC to about 1800 AD (whenever the scroll was deciphered) ever citing this formulation in any intact text written by a recognized Epicurean. Even this text itself is (1) not intact, and (2) not without doubt written by Philodemus, and (3) even if written by Philodemus, we don't have his backup explanation for why it is good, rather than a child's rhyme. And even after 1800, we don't have the original text (just a drawing of a reconstruction) and we don't have any way to assess the accuracy or the mindset of the person who transcribed it. Nor do we know if the person who transcribed it would endorse the use being put to his transcription.

I would be very grateful if someone reading this who is an expert can cite exceptions to the list of cautions I've just cited, but in my reading (which is pretty wide by now) I have not seen a single instance of it being cited, much less endorsed, by an authoritative proponent of Epicurean philosophy.