

# The Twelve Fundamentals - Discussion on Lucretius Today Podcast

Post by "Cassius" of January 3, 2023 at 11:25 AM

I just clicked through to read the article and see what Don was reacting about. I completely agree with Don. My comment about Chris Fisher deserving credit for consistency was aimed at my appreciation for the fact that he stands with those who consistently are honest about the roots of Stoicism in the theistic world. Absent a foundation as to the nature of the world, nothing else in a philosophy is going to make sense, and at least Fisher is honest that Stoicism is grounded in a theistic worldview, just like Plato and just like Aristotle.

Of course I completely disagree with Fisher, but at least when you're honest about your worldview you aren't justifiably accused of misrepresentation about what you really believe. This isn't the time or place for a rant about "modern stoicism" but it's interesting to think about how likely it is that Aurelius and all the ancient stoics, who understand what their philosophy is based on, would probably be as upset at the "modern stoics" as they were at Epicurus - and probably more so. The ancient Stoics thought Epicurus was dead wrong, but at least they generally credited Epicurus about being honest about what he believed. And for that I can have more respect for ancient stoicism than for the modern variety that tries to avoid the issue.

The only other comment I want to make right now is about this sentence from the article:

Quote

For the Epicureans, acceptance of providence invited the gods into the lives of humans, and this they believed was a primary source of psychological distress.

This kind of formulation is bad enough coming from a stoic, but it's even more irritating to me because it probably is an accurate reflection of much modern writing about Epicurus - even from those on "our side." Yes, providence is a primary source of "psychological distress." But it's much more than that, and this is far downstream of the main issue.

The whole providence argument is just *false*, and that's the starting point of the analysis. If providence were *true* even though painful, then it would be easy to reconcile it with Epicurean philosophy, because we often choose pain in order to avoid worse pain or obtain greater pleasure. The problem with "providence" is not that it is painful, but that because it is false it has no persuasive claim to be the foundation of the "best" life. The reason Epicurean philosophy is convinced of this conclusion is rooted in the physics and epistemology, not because Epicurus was fixated on avoiding "psychological distress" or any other kind of pain as an end in itself.

That's why I think all of these various positions - the Fisher position, the modern Stoic position, and even some allegedly "friendly-to-Epicurus" positioning - is so damaging. If Epicureans were convinced that providence were true, there would be no more enthusiastic providentialists than Epicureans. It's because Epicurus had a theory of knowledge under which it's possible to be confident of what is "true" and what is "false" in important issues of life like this that Epicurus concluded that neither providence nor idealism nor anything else can supersede the faculty of pleasure that Nature gave us as the guide of life.