

New Christos Yapijakis Article: "The Philosophical Management of Stress"

Post by "Don" of January 7, 2023 at 8:08 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

It's tricky to describe and yet not sound like a "monster," but it seems to me that Epicurus was saying that the universe simply doesn't care about our moralities.

Thoughts...

One doesn't sound like a "monster" saying the universe doesn't care - about us, our moralities, our culture, our world. That's a simple fact. Fully onboard with that idea.

However...

One starts to sound like that "monster" if it's implied or inferred or understood that Epicureans see "no problem" when people harm or kill others for pleasure. I continue to hold that the philosophy does not do that. I've had this conversation on this forum before, so apologies for anyone who was around for that. But after that basic premise, it gets complicated. After that, it's all contextual. And, I think, I'm able to now get my head around some nuances to that idea. "Torquatus" provides some tough contexts to consider. But this thread has really made me think about the foundational place that context and intention play in sizing up any "ethical" discussion in Epicurean philosophy. It seems to me that one can't really talk about "right" and "wrong" but rather, for example, "just" and "unjust." But there's no judge on high or stone-carved rulebook. A "commandment" like Thou shall not kill is somewhat useless and almost universally ignored. I'm intentionally using that as it's one of the most provocative.

Should you kill to protect your life?

Should you kill to protect your family?

Should you kill to protect your friends?

Should you kill to protect a stranger?

Should you kill to protect your car?

Should you kill to *prevent* harm to your life or your loved ones?

Should you hire someone to kill for you to prevent harm to yourself?

Should you kill animals to eat?

Should you kill rats in your house?

Should you kill bacteria that make you sick?

Should you kill animals in experiments?

Should you kill people like the TV character Dexter does because they've done "bad" things?

I'm hoping the list made you more uneasy as you went down.

To be clear, none of these scenarios matter one way or the other at all to "the universe."

However, we live in a human society with social contracts that provide context for these scenarios. There are just and unjust actions. There are choices and rejections to make. There are wise and unwise choices. *Almost* every one of those scenarios could have multiple contingencies, contexts within which some choices would be prudent and other choices that would not be prudent. Not having a rulebook is hard but it can also be seen as freeing. Because of this, I see Epicurean philosophy as a very grown up, adult way of living. There are exemplars like Epicurus, but ultimately it's up to each individual to make prudent decisions that lead to a healthy body, a tranquil mind, friends that can be relied on, enough community goodwill to be safe, and extravagant pleasures that provide for a pleasurable life.

I'll relinquish the soapbox for now.