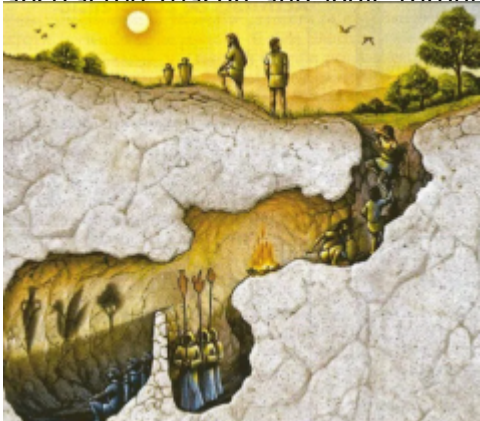


Metaphorically Picturing Epicurean Philosophy

Post by "Cassius" of January 10, 2023 at 8:32 AM

It is good that we often get very deep in the weeds in important questions (The Canon: Three Legs of Four?; When Was Epicurus Born? What is the nature of Anticipations? etc. etc.). However given several recent podcast discussions I am remembering how important it is not to get lost in those weeds, so I am thinking this thread will be a way to keep us also focused on the big picture.

Plato is often and I think fairly identified with the "Cave" analogy, which leads to fruitful possibilities of illustrating maybe the central aspect of the anti-Epicurean philosophies: that our senses are deceptive and we are chained in a prison of shadows from which we need abstracted reason and logic (brought to us by the expert philosophers) as our only means of



How can we contrast and summarize our place in the universe under the Epicurean worldview? We have a couple of illustrations on the forum already:



(Graphic commissioned by Michele Pinto - see right sidebar of the home

page for details).

And Nate's Allegory of the Oasis (see bottom of the EF homepage for link to a description):



Both of these are now several years old, and I see that Nate's graphic was first added here back in 2018 or so.

I think over time it should be a continuing project to develop new versions of graphics which summarize the key role of Epicurus in the history of philosophy. We have allusions like the "hog in Epicurus' herd" from Horace, but most of all we have the opening of book one of Lucretius, which likely played a role in the graphic listed above from Michele (here in the Humphries version):

When human life, all too conspicuous,
Lay foully groveling on earth, weighed down
By grim Religion looming from the skies,
Horribly threatening mortal men, a man,
A Greek, first raised his mortal eyes
Bravely against this menace. No report
Of gods, no lightning-flash, no thunder-peal
Made this man cower, but drove him all the more
With passionate manliness of mind and will
To be the first to spring the tight-barred gates

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2826-metaphorically-picturing-epicurean-philosophy/?postID=21839#post21839>

Of Nature's hold asunder. So his force,
His vital force of mind, a conqueror
Beyond the flaming ramparts of the world
Explored the vast immensities of space
With wit and wisdom, and came back to us
Triumphant, bringing news of what can be
And what cannot, limits and boundaries,
The borderline, the bench mark, set forever.
Religion, so, is trampled underfoot,
And by his victory we reach the stars.

I am not artist myself, but it's easy to take that passage and think of many many different ways to analogize the same point - especially if we combine it with the allusions to Epicurus that start each of the other five books of the poem as well.

So the point here is that while we develop our aptitude in dealing with the details, it's even more important to develop our dexterity with the "big picture." I bet Nate has had many different thoughts about illustrations in the five years since he did his oasis graphic, and the graphic from Michele should have motivated lots of thoughts for alternative illustrations of the essence of the Epicurean approach to life - and that is why it is featured on our home page.

I may pin this post somewhere but as time goes by I hope we can expand this list of pro-Epicurean illustrations much further than we already have.

Edit: Even if you are not an artist yourself, you can still submit "word pictures" to the thread that over time will give ideas for scenarios to other people.