

"Epicurean Philosophy: An Introduction from the 'Garden of Athens'" edited by Christos Yapijakis

Post by "Cassius" of January 27, 2023 at 6:54 PM

I have just recently received an email from Christos Yapijakis indicating that he has read through this thread. His comments that I am pasting below were drafted as a private communication to me, rather than as an exhaustive commentary on the various points raised above, so please understand that they are written in that context. I asked him for permission (which he granted) to repost these so as to include them in the discussion.

It has been some time since this thread started and I have not read back through it with an eye toward adding additional commentary myself as I add Christos' notes into the thread. The main thing I want to restate is that I appreciate all the effort and scholarship Christos has put into his work, and also the effort involved by those who have commented here, all of whom I am sure have written in good faith and with constructive intent to help all of us in the pursuit of Epicurean philosophy. From here on in the thread is Christos' comment, minus his personal introductory and closing thoughts. Christos is very busy and may not check in with additional comments anytime soon, but I should make clear that I am posting this not to end the conversation but to encourage additional constructive commentary on these very important subjects.

... I know all that discussion comes from a friendly perspective towards both Epicurus and myself, so let me clarify some points:

1. The paper "Philosophical Management of Stress based on Science and Epicurean Pragmatism: A Pilot Study" describes a program for the general public and is written for the general experts in philosophy, psychology etc. Therefore, it is written in an objective, emotionless, generalized manner so that people all over the world to be convinced that there are some significant scientific findings using the Epicurean approach. It is not about the Epicurean philosophy per se and that is why we speak about happiness (ataraxia/aponia) and not about pleasure (the paper on Epicurean eustatheia on the other hand describes more in depth the Epicurean philosophy).

2. The tripartite brain is still a sound model in neurobiology (I am an expert in neurogenetics and George Chrousos is an expert in stress neurobiology). Of course the brain is more interconnected and more complicated than that, but that simple model is useful philosophically for the lay people to grasp the main characteristics of human potential. This is the most Epicurean approach possible. Epicurus was not interested for the little details as much as the big picture of things. The details are for specialists, the big picture and the first principles are

for everyone to grasp to avoid confusion and fear of the unknown.

3. Regarding pleasure and happiness, just see [Epicurus' Letter to Menoeceus](#) that explicitly says that:

-We aim to happiness (eustatheia of katastematic pleasure/pleasurable state)

-We do not need pleasure unless our body is in pain lacking it

"He who has a clear and certain understanding of these things will direct every preference and aversion toward **securing health of body** and **tranquility of mind**, seeing that this is the sum and end of a **happy life**. For the end of all our actions is to be **free from pain and fear**, and, when once we have attained all this, the tempest of the soul is laid; seeing that the living being has no need to go in search of something that is lacking, nor to look anything else by which the good of the soul and of the body will be fulfilled. When we are pained lacking pleasure, **then, and then only, do we feel the need of pleasure**".

4. Regarding useful and harmful pleasures, again see [Epicurus' Letter to Menoeceus](#) that explicitly says that:

-Although pleasure is naturally akin to us, some pleasures lead to greater annoyance than pleasure

-Useful pleasures=those that appease pain or vary our enjoyment of life (the second ones we don't need necessarily)

-Harmful pleasures=those that result in more pain than pleasure

"...**we do not choose every pleasure whatever**, but often pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them. And often we consider pains superior to pleasures when submission to the pains for a long time brings us as a consequence a greater pleasure. While therefore all pleasure because it is naturally akin to us is good, **not all pleasure is worthy of choice**, just as all pain is an evil and yet not all pain is to be shunned. It is, however, by measuring one against another, and by looking at the **conveniences** and **inconveniences**, that all these matters must be judged. "

All three papers I authored in that special issue of Conatus-Journal of Philosophy on "Philosophical Management of Stress" (the first ever such issue of an international philosophical journal and I was invited to be the Editor) promote Epicurean philosophy, although they do that in a more subtle, "politically correct" and objective way discussing other philosophical approaches too, which by comparison are barely useful for a very short period of time until reality prevails.

I hope I have made my point to you. I rest my case, as you say in court.

NOTE: In a subsequent followup, Christos included the following, which I think is relevant to the same discussion:

Always remember that the pursuit of pleasure is the path to eustatheia and happiness (katastematic pleasure or pleasurable state) for Epicurus and not a goal by itself as Aristippus or 'prodigals' think (see letter to Menoeceus DL 131-132).

All the best wishes.