

The Art of Frugal Hedonism

Post by "Don" of February 15, 2023 at 11:59 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I agree with virtually every practical consideration stated in the thread above, but I want to repeat a statement I just made [in another thread](#):

As usual I think it's a bad idea to try to come up with a one size fits all rule. I am haven' previously made this comment in the "frugal hedonism" thread, because I see the value in explaining words. But in the end I think the best way to convey this analysis is simply to call it "Epicurean" - and gradually begin the long crawl out of the box that we are in due to the dominance (and our acceptance) of other people's paradigms.

Unfortunately we don't have the ability to claim that our definition of "frugal" or "hedonism" is the correct one. But the word that I do think we should claim, and define as clearly for everyone as we can, is "Epicurean."

I posted over ["in another thread"](#), too, but thought this needed a response here as well.

If I go down a rabbit hole, apologies beforehand, but, just wondering which "practical considerations" are you agreeing with (just to verify and for clarity)?

So, how would you define the three terms "frugal," "hedonism" and "Epicurean" in the context of this thread/discussion?

That excerpt from Diogenes Laertius quotes Diocles as saying the Epicureans lived "a very simple and frugal life" εὐτελέστατα καὶ λιτότατα διαιτώμενοι. Those two words (linked above to LSJ) convey living a life that includes things that are "easily paid for" (which I take to mean "living within one's means") and "simple, inexpensive, frugal" or, "metaphorically, of style, plain, simple, unadorned." Those words, coupled with the modern word "hedonism" (not coined to refer to philosophy until 1828), to me provide "frugal hedonism" as an apt description. Not an exhaustive one or even one without a few hiccups, but an adequate starting point to describe Epicurus's lifestyle.. in keeping with my "bread and water simply means 'take pleasure in the everyday'."

When you say things like...

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"Unfortunately we don't have the ability to claim that our definition of "frugal" or "hedonism" is the correct one,"

...I'm not even sure I understand the point you're trying to make. (Okay, I re-read that, and it *reads* harsher than I meant it... but I don't know a better way to express my confusion.) It seems to me that Epicurus encouraged people to use words in a way that was readily understandable and not to parse and nitpick. Granted, he never called himself a "hedonist." That didn't even exist as a philosophy term until the 19th century. But the "basic" definition is someone who regards pleasure as the primary motivator of human behavior. "Frugal" might be a little fuzzy in meaning but we have a grasp that it means things like living within your means, not spending extravagantly, etc. To me, "frugal hedonism" conveys what Epicurus was conveying throughout his texts. It is an antidote to the ascetic stereotype that is so prevalent in pop culture and academia. It's certainly not a perfect phrase, but it moves toward a more balanced portrayal... although let's get through more of the book and maybe I'll have a different opinion later 😊