

Did Epicurus really oversell the power of science to diminish anxiety?

Post by "Cassius" of February 16, 2023 at 9:57 AM

Yes good point Don. I really don't think we are very much apart on any of this. If I had to summarize why we frequently put different spins on things it is because I think it is interesting to find ways to push the envelope on discussions, and there are almost always going to be multiple ways to do that.

If someone asks me to go into detail about what Epicurus taught I would almost certainly say that he thought generally being frugal is a good idea, and I would say that the Greek word for pleasure is hedone and technicians like to call that "hedonism." Same effect could be gained by calling it "Voluptatism" but that's not in use even in the technical camps 😊

My general pushback not at you but at the world is that I think it is a big problem to try to force Epicurus into boxes recognizable in modern ordinary terms, when I think the core points and thus implications of the philosophy go far beyond modern ordinary terms.

So I am fine with using frugality and hedonism in proper contexts, but I sense that the contexts in which words like "hedonism" are understandable are not really the audience that I personally am most concerned about. If someone is comfortable talking about "hedonism" then odds are (not always!) but I would have to guesstimate that such a person is probably philosophically aware already and probably has already accumulated an eclectic sum that will keep Epicurus in that box in their minds, and they will move on to something else. Most of what I personally would like to be doing isn't targeted at people like that, but at developing a way to express how fundamentally deep and outside-the-box Epicurus really was.

There are lots of directions to go and people to talk to so it's all good and mainly dependent on context.

And remember, you're talking to someone who's here largely because he was roped in by DeWitt's "[Philosophy for the Millions](#)." 😊