

Welcome Remikit!

Post by "Cassius" of March 27, 2023 at 10:09 AM

At some point (hopefully soon) we should set up a separate post to highlight the different approaches between Pater's "Marius The Epicurean" and Frances Wright's "A Few Days In Athens." Both books are devoted in part to pointing out problems with Stoicism, but in much different ways. {Two prior threads on Marius the Epicurean here at EF are [here](#) and [here](#).}

The Wikipedia article on Marius says ***"In particular Pater is careful in the novel to distinguish between 'hedonism', as usually understood, and Marius's cerebral, ascetic version of Epicureanism."***

This is really the source of the problem with Pater's book -- he does not appreciate the distinction that Emily Austin expresses well in her book and articles that, as Diogenes Laertius said - "[Epicurus] differs from the Cyrenaics with regard to pleasure. They do not include under the term the pleasure which is a state of rest, but only that which consists in motion. Epicurus admits both; also pleasure of mind as well as of body, as he states in his work On Choice and Avoidance and in that On the Ethical End, and in the first book of his work On Human Life and in the epistle to his philosopher friends in Mytilene."

In contrast to Marius, France Wright's A Few Days In Athens focuses very strongly on the actual doctrines of Epicurus and explains how prudent hedonism does not lead to asceticism, but to a complete understanding of how the pursuit of pleasure fits into a philosophy in which happiness is the acknowledged goal, rather than wrestling endlessly with the essentially theistic view of life. Also from the wikipedia article on Marius:

"His epiphany in the Sabine Hills, where he sensed a "divine companion" and the existence of a Platonic "Eternal Reason" or Cosmic Mind, is not a prelude to religious faith, though it continues to comfort him."

In the case of Pater's view of Epicurus, "...the novel remains open-ended, leaving us with a provisional ideal of 'aesthetic humanism' while bringing Marius, intuitively if not intellectually, to a Christian end."

In the case of Frances Wright's view of Epicurus, the novel ends with a strong and unwavering attack on the religious supernatural perspective as essentially the

ultimate source of evil in the world.

Quote from A Few Days In Athens

“Under all these forms and varieties of the external and internal man, still, with hardly an exception, I have found him unhappy. With more capacity for enjoyment than any other creature, I have seen him surpassing the rest of existences only in suffering and crime. “Why is this and from whence? A master error, for some there must be, leads to results so fatal — so opposed to the apparent nature and promise of things? Long have I sought this error — this main-spring of human folly and human crime. I have traced, through all their lengthened train of consequents and causes, human practice and human theory; I have threaded the labyrinth to its dark beginning; I have found the first link in the chain of evil; I have found it — in all countries — among all tribes and tongues and nations; I have found it, — fellow-men, I have found it in — RELIGION!”

So reading and comparing Marius to "A Few Days In Athens" can be eye-opening.

<http://www.Afewdaysinathens.com>