

Does the philosophy change you?

Post by “Martin” of June 16, 2023 at 4:35 AM

It seems there are worlds between religious education in America/Ireland and Germany.

In Germany, religious education is a mandatory part of education in state schools, includes church service on one school day morning per week, and is usually done separately for Catholics and Protestants, whereby Protestants are usually lumped together in one curriculum irrespective of their variants. More recently, religious education for Muslims, too, has been added in public schools. Parents can opt their kids out of the mandatory religious education, and from age 14 onward, kids can opt out on their own. However, that opting out was rare during my time at school.

This background would suggest that indoctrination is particularly severe in Germany but actually it is not, at least not in Cologne, which is predominantly Catholic, and nearby urban areas. Culture in Cologne is traditionally oriented toward pleasure. Carnival season lasts about 5 months, and many activists prepare for the next season during the remaining part of the year. Popular pubs are full throughout the year. Pleasure is in people's mind all the time.

A fear-mongering religion would be ridiculous in Cologne. Therefore, religious education was made interesting and partly even fun. As a consequence, I was confident to go to heaven as a faithful kid with good grades in Catholic education and did not fear Hell. Under the influence of my protestant father, who detested the Catholic church, I stopped attending Mass on Sundays and distanced myself from the church and the bogus concept of sins early but not yet from belief in the Abrahamic god and did not even know of the possibility of atheism until religious education discussed atheist publications in my 11th year at school. Against the intention of the curriculum, I found the arguments of the teacher against Marx and Freud not convincing and turned agnostic with 3 years of struggle in the transition. I stayed with Catholic ethics as a default because I did not find a new set of explicit ethics for several decades but ditched any part of Catholic ethics which did not make sense to me or appeared to be politically conservative mind control. Therefore, getting rid of Catholic programming of my subconscious was easy.

It was much more difficult to get rid of idealism. Whereas I am rather calm by nature, deviations from the ideal/optimum could trigger fits of anger both at work and in private. After 20 years of struggle, I got rid of that, too.

Recognizing Epicurus' philosophy as similar to my philosophy of life in 2016 and studying where it goes beyond what I had figured out on my own before has rooted out the last remains of that idealism of my past.

So far, my biggest change from exposure to Epicurus has been increased confidence in my choices.