

Does the philosophy change you?

Post by “Don” of June 16, 2023 at 10:17 AM

[Quote from Eoghan Gardiner](#)

to experience the pleasure freely without a need to thank anyone.

Agreed... with the following addendum 😊 Your post got me to thinking.

When you say "without a need to thank *anyone*," I'm assuming (correct me if I'm misinterpreting) you're referring to a god or a capital-G God. "Someone" who has "bestowed" their "blessings" upon you. Scare quotes used intentionally here. Fully and completely agree with that sentiment.

However...

Epicurus's writings and associated texts contain multiple references to the importance of gratitude in the Epicurean life, including:

- "The life of folly is empty of gratitude and full of anxiety – it is focused wholly on the future." (U491, quoted by Seneca)
- He will be grateful to anyone when he is corrected. (Diogenes Laertius' characteristics of the sage)
- "the old can be young by means of gratitude for the pleasures which have happened" (Letter to Menoikeus)
- VS17: 17. It is not the young man who is most happy, but the old man who has lived beautifully; for despite being at his very peak the young man stumbles around as if he were of many minds, whereas the old man has settled into old age as if in a harbor, secure in his gratitude (χάριτι) for the good things he was once unsure of.
- VS55: Misfortune must be cured through gratitude (χάριτι) for what has been lost and the knowledge that it is impossible to change what has happened.
- VS69: The ingratitude (ἀχάριστον) of the soul makes a creature greedy for endless variation in its way of life.
- VS75: This saying is utterly ungrateful (ἀχάριστος) for the good things one has achieved: Provide for the end of a long life (τέλος ὄρα μακροῦ βίου.). (Saint-Andre note: The force of ὄρα here might be "provide for" (as I have translated it), "beware", or even just "look to"; the overall sense is that preparing for a supposed afterlife shows a lack of appreciation for the good things of life on earth.)
- VS35: Don't ruin the things you have by wanting what you don't have, but realize that they too are things you once did wish for. (Note: Doesn't specifically use gratitude but is implied)

So, gratitude appears to be an important component of the Epicurean life, of an Epicurean perspective on the world. For me, this includes gratitude directed toward people (not gods) or just gratitude for the joy of living, gratitude for the fact that I'm around to experience both [the little pleasures](#) and the big pleasures available to me. As silly as it may sound, I say "Thank you" when the alarm goes off in my car to tell me I've left the keys in the ignition. I'm not thanking the universe; I am literally thanking the engineer that came up with the idea of including this in my car. That's what I'm thinking when I say that. I am sure to thank people for doing nice things for me and not letting them pass by. I'm not a god. I don't see gratitude as a weakness 😊 I can also feel gratitude for the sun shining on my face when I'm walking through the woods or seeing the sun streaming through the leaves. Not to some Deity for His Creation 😬 but gratitude for the *fact* of my existence and my ability to be here and now and to experience that pleasing sensation.

I don't mean to belabor this point, but I have found this attitude helpful and felt the need to share it.