

My struggle with Norman DeWitt

Post by "Cassius" of August 25, 2023 at 11:05 AM

This is one place in Nussbaum's "Therapy of Desire" where she makes similar assertions about Epicurus being authoritarian, which I think are simply not a fair reading of the texts, and far too

friendship.
Epicureans place the emphasis, here, on the role of the wise teacher, who demands the pupil's trust and "confession," and sometimes uses techniques (such as memorization and repetition) that do not require the pupil's own critical activity. Skeptics go much further, engineering the methods of philosophy to cut away the pupil's active cognitive contribution, leaving her more and more in the grip of motivating forces that do not involve belief.⁸ Of all the schools it is the Stoics, I think, who most effectively combine recognition of depth in the soul with respect for the pupil's active practical reasoning, producing a picture of philosophical friendship that combines intimacy with symmetry and reciprocity, a picture of self-scrutiny that supplements, and does not displace, dialectical philosophical procedures. (Lucretius seems to capture this combination in many of his arguments, both forming that sort of friendship with the reader and making friendship an end in itself; he may to this extent diverge from the authoritarianism of what seems to have been the common Epicurean procedure.)

As for the arguments in favor of recognizing the unconscious, these are not above criticism—no such argument could be—but in the case of Lucretius on fear they are extremely impressive. The central problem here is

⁸ The Skeptics do not explicitly recognize the unconscious—and of course to have any theory of the structure of the mind is contrary to their procedure.

Elena Nicoli has written against Nussbaum's interpretation as per here:

Thread

[Responses to Nussbaum's Criticism That Epicureanism Is Not A Real Philosophy; That Epicureanism Numbs Intellect And Critical Thinking](#)

This is a thread to discuss the presentation material posted by Jason Baker entitled "The Pleasure of Knowledge: Reassessing Nussbaum's Interpretation of Epicurean Therapy" by Dr. Elena Nicoli, Radboud University, subtitled "A Contested Influence. Hellenistic Philosophy and

Modern Thought from Nietzsche to Nussbaum." This is not the full lecture, but summarizes the main points with some excellent citations to Epicurean literature.

The original post is here:

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Cassius

April 12, 2018 at 6:18 AM

More criticism of Nussbaum's interpretations here:

Thread

[**Nussbaum \(Martha\) - "Therapy of Desire"**](#)

Martha Nussbaum's "Therapy of Desire" is a widely known book with much commentary on the implications of Epicurean philosophy for psychology. These comments are not a review of the book and I do not intend them to be taken too negatively. However I think that a reader can more fairly assess the claims Nussbaum makes about Epicurean philosophy earlier in the book if the reader is aware of the ultimate negative conclusions she draws at the end. Here are several excerpts, mostly from the final...



Cassius

February 1, 2018 at 9:13 PM