

Epicurean Perspectives on Cultural Conflict

Post by "Cassius" of March 27, 2019 at 6:37 PM

This thread may give us one of our first opportunities to deal with strong differences of opinion on important details while still focusing on the core aspects of profiting from Epicurean philosophy, and also helping to reignite interest in Epicurus via broad areas in which we can agree.

One of the hallmarks of the ancient Epicureans appears to have been frankness of speech, so I will be frank and observe that my own personal experience and observation is much in line with Daniel's perspective. I consider Abrahamic religion in all its variations to be poison which pollutes thought and discussion and makes it impossible for fundamental Epicurean perspectives to grow. I would cite Lucian's "Alexander The Oracle Monger" and his comments in "Peregrine" about Christians for support of that, but obviously the topic is immense.

However rather than completely agree with this "Rationality cannot be integrated with faith; nor reason with anti-reason; nor, in philosophy, fact with fantasy" I would be a little more cautious. Clearly Epicurus was strongly against the excesses of Platonic dialectical logic, and yet he said also that the wise man governs his life by reason. I'm not sure anyone is explicitly "anti-reason" in the modern world, but I agree that Abrahamic religion teaches exactly that (anti-reason on the most fundamental issues of life). And I am no fan of fantasy, but the limits and uses of speculation can get complex.

So to repeat my personal experience and viewpoint is very close to what Daniel is suggesting. But to simply say "I agree with X" doesn't advance the ball. I think all of us would agree that the world is in a terrible mess due to poor thinking on these issues, and I don't hear or see anyone in the modern world suggesting a way out of the problem. That's where I think Epicurus and Epicurean philosophy comes in, but we need to start at a deeper level and establish the issues on which we can agree before we jump too fast into those areas where we disagree. And I think that I sense that I agree with Oscar, that it is very important not to overgeneralize. In my personal life most of the people who are closest and most important to me are Christian. I abhor their religion, and yet I understand how they got to where they are, and I know it's not possible to address the problems overnight - and in many cases it's impossible to address them.

So where I'd like to think that we can contribute to the bigger problem, while at the same time profiting ourselves, is to start deeper and work on seeing where we agree and disagree on Epicurus' fundamental views on religion and the nature of the universe.

And at that level, there ARE NO SUPERNATURAL GODS, and anyone or any institution which promotes otherwise is ultimate going to be the enemy of Epicurean philosophy and Epicureans - whether we consider them to be OUR enemy, or not.