Episode 197 -LucretiusToday Interviews Dr. Marcelo Boeri

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I was just re-reading Emily Austin’s chapter on “Living Unnoticed: Politics and Power.” I think it gives a good, and moderate, analysis of the basis for an Epicurean politics. I will refrain from my penchant for reproducing all the quotes that I particularly like. 😩

But this one hit me personally:

“An Epicurean’s political activity must operate within the bounds of their own tranquility.” [And I would add: health and well-being.]

Most of my social activism violated those bounds: I was far too often stressed, developed chronic stomach problems, had anxiety nightmares, etc. My father, in his idealistic neo-Kantian zeal, died at a young age from chronic stress and the addictive behaviors (most notably chain smoking) that he used to try to damp it down. (We disagreed politically, and there were some issues we had to agree not to discuss.)

I am also reminded of a story about North American volunteers against the political oppression in El Salvador at the time. The local people were joyously preparing for a religious feast and fiesta. The volunteers asked how they (the locals) could have such cheerfulness in the face of terrible, day-after-day oppression and suffering. The response (in so many words): “You speak like people who will not live here. You come to help because of your kind-heartedness and compassion – but then you will return home. We must remain. How could we endure without occasions for happy celebration?”

If one cannot be active without self-inflicted *τἄρᾰχή* and *πόνος* (which you will also likely inflict on those around you), best, all round, to refrain.