

Paul Thyry (Baron D'Holbach / Mirabaud) - French / German Sympathizer With Some Epicurean Ideas

Post by "Onenski" of December 27, 2023 at 11:15 AM

Thank you for your great comments, [Cassius](#) and [Pacatus](#) .

I recognize that one of the theses that Epicurus would not have renounced is precisely free will. And to deny it would be to move away from Epicurean philosophy.

Skepticism about free will, I think, is a personal position of mine, and it is perhaps the one that makes me wonder things like: if the study of nature pointed out that we do not have free will, would Epicurus accept it? Or couldn't it be that Epicurus was wrong about this question just as he was wrong about the size of the Sun? Or also, if what matters is practical life for ordinary people, then would it be valid for us to accept things like biases just because we feel it although they are unjustified?

There is a conflict (apparent or real), which D'Holbach recognized, between the study of nature and the belief in an exclusive capacity of human beings not to be subject to prior events, or just those that are convenient for attributing moral responsibility.

I recognize, Cassius, that for the moment it would be very hard for people to live without that belief. The same was said about the belief in God: that people would behave immorally, that one cannot trust in an atheist, or that life would become meaningless. One of my personal projects consists in thinking about a possible way of life that integrates free will skepticism and epicurean philosophy.

In any case, I don't want to be heterodox enough to say that Epicurus was wrong, or anything like that. I know that the purpose of the forum is to discuss Epicurean philosophy as closely as possible to its original sources, and that does not involve a defense of free will skepticism.

What may possibly be pertinent is to seek, over time, a stronger and more robust understanding of Epicurus' position vis-a-vis this kind of skepticism.