

Epicurean Views On Hierarchy In Social Structures

Post by "DavidN" of March 13, 2024 at 3:22 PM

[Quote from Peter Konstans](#)

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I don't think **centralized** hierarchical structures are compatible with Epicureanism. Self-sufficiency, being an epicurean virtue, is increasingly stifled the more centralized and top heavy power structures becomes. I also don't agree with your analysis of the decline of epicureanism in late antiquity, from what I've read most scholars think that in the face of environmental and societal changes the appeal of Epicureanism to the general populis declined.

Non-hierarchical forms of social organization are known to be indefinitely viable only in the case of immediate-return hunter-gatherers which today can hardly be said to exist anymore. They represent way less than 1% of the global population. All other egalitarian experiments from within civilization have failed and in the rare case where they were politically successful (starting with revolutionary France) produced nothing more than mass terror and hideous dictatorships. In my view civilization and egalitarianism cannot possibly co-exist and that's why even numerous non-political small-scale egalitarian experiments in the West have failed too. It's not that they were destined to fail, it's just that civilization does everything in its power to destroy such communities and it invariably succeeds because it is resourceful, aggressive and ruthless.

I was not positing non-hierarchical structures, Anarchy is always short lived, that's polisci 101. Even hunter gather societies have hierarchy. I was talking specifically about **centralized** hierarchy vs decentralized hierarchy. The french revolution since you mentioned it is the perfect segue into another polisci 101 topic, Alexis de Tocqueville's "*Democracy in America*". As Tocqueville discovers, the reason democracy succeeds in America where it fails in France is in the decentralized nature of colonial America vs the centralized nature of European (cities) countries. Jefferson alludes to this in his agrarianism musing about his vision for America's future in his "Notes on the State of Virginia". I don't want to get to into the weeds of political discourse on the forums so if your interested in my personal line of study I'll leave a list of points for your perusal. Otherwise ignore the following section.

[The Swiss Cantons](#): an example of a successful decentralized form of government used by the Founders as an example of a successful form of confederacy.

Leading to [The Confederation period](#) from which we inherit many of our current checks and balances in government.

A number of [Intentional Communities](#) have been experimenting with novel forms of Decentralized Hierarchical structures that have been, in their own small way, successful and are worth consideration. (And are proof that your view of failed egalitarian experiments is a misconception, just because some may fail does not negate the fact that some succeed.)

As centralized hierarchical structures will always be adversely affected and constrained by [The Iron Law Of Oligarchy](#), as laid out in Robert Michels' "[Political Parties](#)". (also polisci 101)

Decentralized structures must be considered as a viable path otherwise you can never escape [Kyklos](#).

I'd also point out Hobbes and Lockes work in contractual government but I need to revisit this material myself, I think somewhere in this is an Epicurean treatise on proper government but I need to do some work on it.