

What Epicurus Offers To The Modern World As Of April, 2024?

Post by "Don" of April 24, 2024 at 11:20 PM

There have been some great responses to your original list of questions, [Cassius](#) . Here's my take fwiw:

Don't you have to be rich to be an Epicurean?

No, but... It seems to me you have to have your basic needs met. You don't need to be "rich" (however one defines that), but you can't be starving, homeless, in fear for your life or for when your next meal might be to be living with eudaimonia. If we look at [Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) or [the revision of Maslow by Diener and Tay](#), we find there are some basic needs that need to be met, but (as Diener and Tay show in their research) you can also be working on fulfilling different needs at the same time and still experience well-being (or subjective well-being - SWB - as they term it).

I have to ask here, too: **What does it mean "to be an Epicurean"?** Do you have to "proclaim your faith" so to speak... or can the conduct of one's life and approach to living be "Epicurean" without "being an Epicurean"? There are several people on this forum who have expressed that they were living an "Epicurean" life before they knew about Epicurus. Epicurus posited that an "Epicurean" life was a natural life, informed by one's natural state of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain. There are details and more, of course and no doubt, that constitute an Epicurean life (e.g., material universe, indifferent gods (if one wants to say they exist physically), no afterlife, etc.) but you can be living "like an Epicurean" without maybe even realizing it.

Epicureanism doesn't offer anything "positive" like Stoicism or Buddhism offers. What do you offer to compete with those?

I think @Twentier said it well: "Epicurean Philosophy offers freedom. It champions choice and rejects fate. It liberates us from turmoil by rejecting superstition. It offers a worldview that recognizes friendship as the greatest pleasure in life, and also, our surest source of security." That all sounds pretty positive to me!

What if your life isn't "together" and you don't have time to read philosophy? Why would someone like that spending any time discussing Epicurus?

Again, I would stress that Epicurus calls one to a "natural life." You don't need to immerse yourself in the philosophy to understand the basics and to reap benefits. It is natural to seek pleasure and avoid pain. It is natural to want an untroubled mind in a healthy body. Question your choices: Will what I'm doing lead to more pain or more pleasure? Realize that you have control over your life, you are responsible for your life. You are the captain of your own little boat... and seek out friends who can help, assist, support, and guide you.

That said, if your life isn't "together" to the extent that you need professional counseling or medical assistance, seek out the counseling or medical attention!

Epicurus's advice to Menoikeus says it well: One is never too young or too old to love and practice wisdom. It is never out of season or untimely to seek well-being. The time for you to seek happiness is now, here.

Why don't you ever discuss "meaningfulness" because I've been convinced that's what I should want out of life?

What convinced you of that, and what do you mean by "meaningfulness" or "purpose". There is no meaning to life other than to pursue pleasure in all its multiplicity. [Monty Python](#) said the "meaning of life" was "try and be nice to people, avoid eating fat, read a good book every now and then, get some walking in, and try and live together in peace and harmony with people of all creeds and nations." Not bad, as far as it goes for a comedic film. The Universe does NOT provide a "meaning" for each individual life or for itself. There is no Great Meaning behind it all. To me, that is freeing! We make our own "meaning" when we decide what impact we will have, what we will focus on, how we treat others and in turn how we want others to treat us, and so on. Pursuing well-being by pursuing pleasure and avoiding unnecessary pain is a purpose.

How do you expect me to understand Epicurus when he approaches so many things so differently than what I am familiar with at church or in the workplaces?

Maybe a fresh perspective is necessary. What do you believe you get of value from the approaches at church or the workplace? It sounds like you may be finding those things unsatisfactory if you're still seeking answers. The Christian church is built on a foundation of Greek philosophy anyway - mostly Stoic and Platonic principles. It pays lip service to Jesus's apocalyptic message, but the ancient Greek influence is strong. So, you're already following a philosophy if you're taking your cues from church.

I would again point to @Twentier 's list of things you already understand from an Epicurean perspective. By and large, we live in an Epicurean world now. Epicurus was a prelude and precursor to science, an acceptance of a material world, a curiosity about extraterrestrial life, and more.

Epicurus also taught the importance - the vital importance - of friendship. Friendship is like dancing in a chorus, clasped hands, twirling round and round. Each dancer supports the other. Epicureanism is a philosophy of friendship linked with personal responsibility for one's life, a life lived in a material world free from the fear of gods and free from anxiety about death. That sounds like a pretty good alternative to the "common knowledge" found in church and in the workplace.