

A Worthwhile Podcast Episode Entitled: " Hume, The Epicureans, And the Origins of Liberalism"

Post by "Cassius" of April 29, 2024 at 2:30 PM

Below is a link that was posted on the Facebook group by one of the participants there. I have now listened to the podcast, which is an interview by [Annika Nordquist](#) with a professor by the name of [Aaron Zubia](#), and in general I am very pleased with it. Of course there are some issues that deserve criticism, but here's my general take, which is very positive:

Despite the title, the podcast does not get into modern partisan politics, and the "origins of liberalism" is a reference much more to "modern classical liberalism" than to the partisan kind. The podcast is a very literate discussion focusing on Hume, but really talking almost as much about Epicurus as anything else. The interviewer and the interviewee both sound very academic, and they treat Epicurus fairly to the extent their religious presumptions allow them. The limitation on my endorsement is that it is clear that both interviewer and interviewee are traditional Christians, and so they have to tone down their praise of Epicurus even when they evidently agree with him. Except for some minor comments about people like Jordan Peterson at the end of the podcast, where it becomes clear that they will never endorse Hume or Epicurus, likely because of their religious presuppositions, both parties on the podcast are obviously impressed by Epicurus. I think that in general this would be a better introduction to Epicurus' work than most any generalist podcast I have heard in a long time. It covers issues like "virtue," the criticism of Socrates, criticism of Stoicism, the basis of empiricism, the "apikoros" issue involving Jewish thought, and lots of issues that don't often get discussed in generalist podcasts.

I was a little disappointed in the professor's defense of Epicurus' view of the senses, as the interviewer asked one of the frequent questions about how Hume, or Epicurus, could put trust in the senses when there's illusions and stuff. The professor didn't go into how error is in the mind and not in the sensations, but if I recall the answer he gave was decent enough, and I don't recall that then or ever did the professor criticize Epicurus or make him sound naive or obsolete.

In fact the main take-away I got from the episode, who is devoting a lot of his emphasis to Hume, is clearly persuaded by many of the opinions of Epicurus (and Hume), and that he would agree with most all of them but for that stubborn refusal to let go of Jerusalem and Judeo-Christianity, which became clear at the end of the episode. However all in all I think this podcast episode is well worth the time to listen.

You might want to give it until about the seven or eight minute mark for the conversation to turn to Epicurus, and in retrospect I am shocked that they managed to have the entire

discussion without once - to my recollection - mentioning Thomas Jefferson! And his name cried out for mention when they started discussing "head" vs "heart" and they did not mention Jefferson's "Head and Heart" letter where Jefferson clearly sides with Epicurus, nor did they mention any of Jefferson's letters supporting Epicurus. Both interviewer and interviewee appear to be "Madisonians" so they aren't predisposed to depart from their "Madisonian" traditionalism, but you can hear in their voices that they are surprised how much good they are finding in Epicurus!

I myself have done very little reading in Hume, and this podcast makes me want to find that time to correct that oversight.

<https://youtu.be/k6IOBN4N3DI?>