

Lecture on practical application of Epicureanism

Post by "Don" of November 26, 2024 at 1:24 PM

I wasn't going to weigh in but curiosity got the best of me. He's only looking at 3 potential applications of Epicurean philosophy, so he's not going to be comprehensive in any way. Plus he says several times that the ancient philosophies (and his lecture) are meant to be provocative and engender discussion.

~7:35: "pursuing pleasure and thinking about the value and nature of pleasure and avoiding pain and distress"

I have no problem with this formulation in a broad sense. The word *αταραξία* (ataraxia) literally means an absence of distress, turbulence, trouble, confusion. From my perspective, the lecturer provides a feasible distillation of one aspect of what Epicureanism is about.

Contentment or satisfaction - Primarily "the lived experience of a person whose body and mind are in a good condition." That makes one feel good. I have no problem with this, and, from my perspective, this even gets at the "whatever does not cause pain is pleasure" that has been discussed on this forum. I do think the lecturer muddies the water around the 19 min mark when he talks about events vs contentment.

I would agree with Cassius that the lecturer doesn't talk about pursuing pain in order to enjoy a greater pleasure, but I think that might be nitpicking in the wider scope of what the lecture is trying to do. He does talk about variety of pleasures (when he talks about the decision of whether or not to have a Coke)

Overall, any halfways decent exposition of Epicurean philosophy out there (that isn't just Stoicism/Buddhism-lite variety of Epicureanism) is a bonus from my perspective.

His examples of "extravagant" desires seem pretty on the nose.

I like his "The typology in itself won't help us answer these questions!" I realize he doesn't quite go where I'd like him to go, but the typology of desires DO NOT tell us what to do. It provides a framework within which to ask ourselves the questions of whether or not something will bring us pleasure or pain.

I wasn't aware of that Philodemus quote, but I like it: "though many fine things result from friendship, there's nothing so great as having one to whom you will say what's in your heart and to listen when the other speaks. **For our nature strongly desires to reveal to someone what it thinks.** (σφόδ[ρ]α γὰρ ἡ φύσις ὀρέγεται πρ[ό]ς τινὰς ἐκκαλύπτειν ἃ [ν]οεῖ.)" (On Frankness of Speech, Fragment 28)

[[] -ca.?- [] κα-]

[λ]ῶς ὁ Φιλ[ο][ν]ε[ί]δου(*) θηρευτής· κὰν π[ε]ριδεικνύμεν ἐπιλογιστικῶς, ὅτι πολλῶν καὶ καλῶν ἐκ φιλίας περιγινόμενων οὐδέν ἐστι τηλικούτον ὡς τὸ ἔχει<ν>, ὡὶ τὰ[γ]κάρδ[ι]ά τις ἐρεῖ καὶ λ[έγ]οντος ἀκούσεται. σφόδ[ρ]α γὰρ ἡ φύσις ὀρέγεται πρ[ό]ς τινὰς ἐκκαλύπτειν ἃ [ν]οεῖ. λοιπὸν δὲ ...

He gives 5 other things he *could* have talked about, so he is VERY aware that his is not a comprehensive exposition.

Personally, I'd give it a C+/B for usefulness to our needs here at the forum... not the least as a starting point for discussion.