

Episode One Hundred Thirty-Four - The Letter to Menoecus 01- Context and Opening of the Letter

Post by “GnothiSeauton” of December 14, 2024 at 4:38 PM

We had our philosophy evening last Thursday and used a portion of this podcast as a discussion point. It went really well. Fortunately, we had in attendance, Mark, the young man who first introduced me to Epicurus as a counterpoint to Stoicism. He had a solid understanding of Epicurus and shared it with the group, helping to inspire a number of interesting questions/discussions. However, despite my best efforts (and our group guidelines) to keep folks focused on the philosophy, we had a couple participants who wanted to argue about its merits and connect it with contemporary society. People appear to be trained these days to lead with judgement rather than curiosity.

One particular point of contention regarded the avoidance of sexual relations. We emphasized that the principal should be seen today as a note of caution to be recognized (as opposed to dogma) as a number of participants agreed that sexual encounters had indeed ended up causing a lot of anxiety and loss of friendship in their lives.

We regained our focus by explaining that Epicurean thought is not a rigid list of laws enforced by some kind of authority (police force - their term), but rather guidelines to help one seek a pleasurable life no matter their position in society. Did we get this right?

I was reminded by the guidelines here to avoid argumentation regarding virtues, political positions, etc. It's a tough standard, but one that is essential if a group ever expects to engage in an enlightened conversation with the intent of understanding philosophy.

Looking forward to using more of the material from this site for future discussions. Thanks again for putting so much work into this valuable resource.