

Article By Dr. Emily Austin - "Epicurus And The Politics Of The Fear Of Death"

Post by "Cassius" of December 10, 2025 at 8:51 AM

I have to stand up and cheer at this paragraph and especially the first sentence. Many modern proponents of Epicurus (not just Warren) have boxed themselves into exactly the position that Austin describes as insufficient.

This first sentence is such an understatement! As I read further into the article it's beginning to occur to me that she's having to "waste time." Some of what Warren et al have suggested are positions that I would say no one but a Stoic or Buddhist would have found entertainable in the first place. But that's where much of modern Epicurean commentary has left us, having to go through and dismiss corruptions like she is attacking here in a very understated way.

This is an excellent article.

Quote

Occupying an argumentative space in which one lacks reason to avoid easily and ethically avoidable deaths should, I think, be a last resort. An Epicurean, then, should first search out something other than pain to explain her decision to seek her own safety and ensure the safety of others. For instance, she might avoid the tyrant because death at the hands of the tyrant is unpredictable and uncertain. She might claim that mental anxiety arising from uncertainty justifies her escape rather than the prospect of physical pain. The standard interpretation clearly prohibits this response, however, since anxiety about uncertain death is a species of the fear of death, and the standard interpretation insists that all fears of death are irrational and eliminable. Fear about when one's death will occur is outright a fear of death.

Display More