

Epicurus And Homer's Odyssey

Post by "Cassius" of July 24, 2026 at 7:46 AM

I have updated this thread title and added Youtube links (into post 1 above) to the TV Miniseries production starring **Armand Assante, Isabella Rossellini, Vanessa Williams, and many others.**

We can certainly discuss the differences between this and the new Christopher Nolan version as well, as that too would be interesting.

But this older version gives us probably a more "standard" version of the story for those of us who have not read Homer in decades - if at all.

Another issue would be considering Epicurus' view of Homer's writing and plot from Epicurus' view of a character like Odysseus. What aspects of Odysseus' character would Epicurus find admirable, and which not?

I just finished watching the Miniseries version for the first time and I have a couple of preliminary comments:

- 1. This story gives us a lot of material to understand what Epicurus was fighting against in terms of the majority Greek view of the gods and their intervention in human life.**
- 2. It also gives us a picture of a Greek hero who might have understood that the gods were powerful and needed to be humored to a degree, but who also took whatever steps he could to fight back against their interference in his life.**
- 3. Seems like half or more of the story is Odysseus being confronted with goddesses or kings who offered him immortality and a life of relaxed total pleasure, but that Odysseus rejected this time and time again because he loved his home and family more. Rather than calling this attitude "duty over pleasure" I would say it is more fair to say that he chose specific mental pleasures of devotion to his own country and family over other bodily/sensual sensual pleasures that were not particularly his own. And he was choosing them not because the gods told him to -- in fact often in opposition to them - but because he himself chose them. These episodes speak volumes about Greek attitudes toward pleasure -- not that pleasure is to be rejected in general, but that some pleasures are more pleasurable than others. The idea that the Greeks of Epicurus; time would have perceived "tranquility" or "calmness" INSTEAD OF or OVER pleasure as the best way of life is ridiculous.**

Much more likely is that the majority of Greeks and Romans shared Cicero's formulation -- "a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures."

Cicero, In defense of Publius Sestius, 10.23: “He {Publius Clodius} praised those most who are said to be above all others the teachers and eulogists of pleasure {the Epicureans}. ... He added that these same men were quite right in saying that the wise do everything for their own interests; that no sane man should engage in public affairs; that *nothing was preferable to a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures*. But those who said that men should aim at an honorable position, should consult the public interest, should think of duty throughout life not of self-interest, should face danger for their country, receive wounds, welcome death – these he called visionaries and madmen.” Note: [Here is a link to Perseus where the Latin and translation of this can be compared](#). The Latin is: “nihil esse praestabilius otiosa vita, plena et conferta voluptatibus.” See also here for [word translations](#).