

A Reddit Exchange With Comments

Post by “Cassius” of September 29, 2019 at 11:52 AM

I plan to try to get over there more often, but it's a problem of (1) lack of resources, and (2) motivation. Reddit is much more like a gladiator school where there is constant confrontation and fighting. That can be good motivation for producing new content, but in the end we have to decide how much time to spend opposing people who are never going to be on "our side" vs. building our own team. EpicureanFriends is *our* team - the Reddit subgroups are not set up to be for the benefit of, or (to my observation) run by, people who hold to a non-Stoicized version of Epicurus.

And the non-Stoicized version of Epicurus is essentially the Ciceronian / Plutarchian criticism of Epicurus melded with an "apology" for Epicurus. Their position is that Epicurus fully defined pleasure as "absence of pain," and that once you understand that what Epicurus was really after was "tranquility" rather than "pleasure" you will see that Epicurus was as much of a virtue-ethicist as any Stoic or Platonist.

It is one of the hardest realizations to accept, but I am thoroughly convinced that there will always be "sides" and "teams" on these issues. We have to accept that not everyone is going to agree with us, nor is it productive for us to try to change the minds of our opponents after a certain point.

Recalling what Frances Wright had Epicurus say [in Chapter 8 of "A Few Days In Athens"](#) -

Theon: “Then, truly, if the master had such an intention, I am very glad I did not follow him. But I passed the evening at my own lodgings, with my friend Cleanthes.”

Epicurus: “Trying to talk him into good humor and charity, was it?”

Theon: “Something so.”

(Remainder of names are omitted - the flow of conversation continues -)

“And you succeeded ?”

“Verily, I don’t know; he did not leave me in worse humor than he came.”

“Nay, then it must have been in better. Explanation always approaches or widens the differences between friends.”

“Yes, but we also entered into argument.”

“Dangerous ground that, to be sure. And your fight, of course, ended in a drawn battle.”

“You pay me more than a merited compliment, in concluding that to be a thing of course.”

“Nay, your pardon! I pay you any thing but a compliment. It is not that I conclude your rhetoric and your logic equal, but your obstinacy and your vanity.”

“Do you know, I don’t think myself either obstinate or vain,” said Theon, smiling.

“Had I supposed you did, I might not have seen occasion to give you the information.”

“But on what grounds do you think me obstinate and vain?”

“Your years; your years. And do you think there is a man under twenty that is not both?”

“Why, I should think an old man, at least, more obstinate than a young one.”

“I grant you, when he is obstinate, which is pretty often, but not quite always; and when he is vain, the same. But whilst many old men have vanity and obstinacy in the superlative degree, all young men have those qualities in the positive. I believe your share to be tolerably moderate, but do not suppose that you have no share at all. Well, and now tell me, was it not a drawn battle?”

“I confess it was. At least, we neither of us convinced the other.”

“My son, it would have added one more to the seven wonders if you had. I incline to doubt, if two men, in the course of an olympiad, enter on an argument from the honest and single desire of coming at the truth, or if, in the course of a century, one man comes from an argument convinced by his opponent.”

“Well, then, if you will allow me no credit for not being convinced, you may at least for my not being silenced, I, so young an arguer, and Cleanthes so practiced a one!”