

Wilson (Catherine) - "How To Be An Epicurean"

Post by "Todd" of November 5, 2019 at 3:44 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

she makes the astonishing statement "we live longer than our ancestors but in a sicklier fashion." Really? I have not seen evidence of that. Seems like she needs to cite sources.

I presume, based on the preceding context, that she is referring here to so-called diseases of civilization, such as obesity, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, certain cancers, etc. And by "our ancestors", she probably means our pre-agricultural ancestors. I don't know what evidence there is to support this claim, but in-context, it doesn't seem totally preposterous.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

4) P 24 "they sought... to balance the ethical treatment of others with our own self-interest"-- omg. So, what is ethical, then, lol? "Balance" used this way is a huge pet peeve of mine. There is no need to balance-- the pleasure of others is on the same side of the scale as my own, inseparable, although this depends on specifically who they are. These things are inseparable for a typically empathetic human. Understanding this is absolutely critical to understanding Epicurus, I believe. Believing that these pleasures are on opposite sides of some imaginary scale will lead to nonsense finagling, every single time. You only wind up with this stuff if you forget about subjective feelings.

I would like this 100X if I could! The importance of this when it comes to ethics and justice cannot be over-emphasized.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

5) P 24, discusses what she sees as the 3 key claims of Epicurus-- material nature of reality, no divine oversight, and finality of death. Although I do think these are important, I do not know that I would consider them more important than the way he put subjective feelings of pleasure and pain into the Canon or that this can be derived from those 3 items without the experience of feelings.

In Wilson's defense, the Kindle preview I'm looking at only says that these are Epicurus' "most famous" teachings. I might dispute that, but I don't see her explicitly stating that she believes they are the most important (although that might be reasonably inferred).

In any case, what we consider most important is going to be a subjective thing. For people coming from a religious background, these may well be the most important lessons to be learned from Epicurus.

[Quote from Elayne](#)

7) P 34 "Epicurus himself pointed out that the direct pursuit of pleasurable sensations is usually self defeating." What? Did he do that? I missed it. She doesn't give a reference

[Quote from Cassius](#)

This is going to go down as one of the most ridiculous statements in the book.

LOL! I'd be very interested to see a reference for that one!