

Are There Examples of Greek or Roman Art Holding Up "Absence of Pain" As An Ideal To Be Desired? - Reference: Oblovomitis!

Post by "Cassius" of November 7, 2019 at 11:18 AM

Quote

Oblovom (Russian: Обломов; [e'blɔmɐf]) is the second novel by Russian writer [Ivan Goncharov](#), first published in 1859. Ilya Ilyich Oblovom is the central character of the novel, portrayed as the ultimate incarnation of the [superfluous man](#), a symbolic character in 19th-century Russian literature. Oblovom is a young, generous [nobleman](#) who seems [incapable of making important decisions](#) or [undertaking any significant actions](#). Throughout the novel he rarely leaves his room or bed. In the first 50 pages, he manages only to move from his bed to a chair.^[1] The book was considered^[by whom?] a satire of Russian [intelligentsia](#).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oblovom>

This probably does not strictly qualify as an example of a character held up as a DESIRABLE example of putting "absence of pain" first, but that may be because it is largely inconceivable to find much that is desirable in putting absence of pain first!

On the other hand, this sounds like a VERY GOOD satire of MUCH "intelligentsia"!

Good catch -- how did you come across this?

(I might split this off from Charles' thread if it becomes too much of a distraction. But I do think it is a productive sidetrack to talk about this because that is essentially behind Charles' original post - thinking about the relationship of Epicurean positions to instances from Greco-Roman art.)

Plot Summary - Pretty much the natural result of putting "avoiding pain" at the front of one's life! -

The novel focuses on the life of the main character, Ilya Ilyich Oblovom. Oblovom is a member of the upper middle class and the son of a member of Russia's nineteenth century landed gentry. Oblovom's distinguishing characteristic is his slothful attitude towards life. Oblovom raises this trait to an art form, conducting his little daily business from his bed.

The first part of the book finds Oblovom in bed one morning. He receives a letter from the manager of his country estate, Oblovovka, explaining that the financial situation is

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1269-are-there-examples-of-greek-or-roman-art-holding-up-absence-of-pain-as-an-ideal/?postID=5218#post5218>

deteriorating and that he must visit to make some major decisions. But Oblomov can barely leave his bedroom, much less journey a thousand miles into the country.

As he sleeps, a dream reveals Oblomov's upbringing in Oblomovka. He is never required to work or perform household duties, and his parents constantly pull him from school for vacations and trips or for trivial reasons. In contrast, his friend Andrey Stoltz, born to a German father and a Russian mother, is raised in a strict, disciplined environment, and he is dedicated and hard-working.

Stoltz visits at the end of Part 1, finally rousing Oblomov from sleep. As the story develops, Stoltz introduces Oblomov to a young woman, Olga, and the two fall in love. However, his apathy and fear of moving forward are too great, and she calls off their engagement when it is clear that he will keep delaying their wedding and avoiding putting his affairs in order.

Oblomov is swindled repeatedly by his "friends" Taranteyev and Ivan Matveyevich, his landlady's brother, and Stoltz has to undo the damage each time. The last time, Oblomov ends up living in penury because Taranteyev and Ivan Matveyevich are blackmailing him out of all of his income from the country estate, which lasts for over a year before Stoltz discovers the situation and reports Ivan Matveyevich to his supervisor. Meanwhile, Olga leaves Russia and visits Paris, where she bumps into Stoltz on the street. The two strike up a romance and end up marrying.

However, not even Oblomov could go through life without at least one moment of self-possession and purpose. When Taranteyev's behavior at last reaches insufferable lows, Oblomov confronts him, slaps him around a bit and finally kicks him out of the house. Sometime before his death he is visited by Stoltz, who had promised to his wife a last attempt at bringing Oblomov back to the world. During this visit Stoltz discovers that Oblomov has married his widowed landlady, Agafia Pshenitsina, and had a child - named Andrey, after Stoltz. Stoltz realizes that he can no longer hope to reform Oblomov, and leaves. Oblomov spends the rest of his life in a second Oblomovka, continuing to be taken care of by Agafia Pshenitsina as he used to be taken care of as a child. She can prepare the food he likes, meal, and makes sure that Oblomov does not have a single worrisome thought.

By then Oblomov had already accepted his fate, and during the conversation he mentions "Oblomovitis" as the real cause of his demise. Oblomov dies in his sleep, finally fulfilling his wish to sleep forever. Stoltz adopts his son upon his death.