

Discussion of the Society of Epicurus' 20 Tenets of 12/21/19

Post by "Cassius" of December 30, 2019 at 7:02 PM

[Quote from Hiram](#)

I shared the hermarchus example elsewhere and am curious to know what you think about it because the scholars, it seems, would have wanted us to apply these Doctrines in real life situations and under diverse conditions rather than be armchair philosophers.

I think we all agree that it is desirable to apply the Epicurean doctrines to real life situations and not be armchair philosophers. That is a huge point and I cannot imagine anyone disagreeing with that. The real issue comes down to our attitude toward the fact that different people will come to different conclusions about what will make them happy in a particular situation. When that occurs, we can offer the Epicurean framework of the nature of the universe and point out that no god or no Platonic ideals justify any particular decision, and that if they do something to get themselves killed that will be the end of their life, and we can point out all sorts of related observations about the limits of logic, the nature of living things as having some free will but also doing some things by necessity, etc etc....

But the minute we stray into saying that "if you are an Epicurean you will reach XXX conclusion" then we've gone further than the philosophy allows and we have undercut all of our premises from which we started. At the very least before discussing any policy decision we would need an exhaustive review of as many relevant circumstances as we could gather, and in the process of discussing those it would quickly be clear that there are no firm rules that apply outside the particular context.

Which is not to say that the analysis can't be done. Not only can it be done, it MUST be done by the people involved. It's urgent that it be done! It's essential that it be done! If you back away from doing it you're not a man, you're a worm! (Let me not go too far in emphasizing my Nietzschean variation on the Epicurean tune that you have but one life to live and that nihilism for losers and so you must live as vigorously as you can! 😊)

But in regard again to the vegetarianism discussion, I don't see it as well documented enough to consider it outside the standard framework, and I wouldn't even get to the point of comparing it to the standard framework until I were firmly convinced that the text is reliable, which I am not.