

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

Post by "Cassius" of December 31, 2019 at 11:22 AM

[Quote from Hiram](#)

But do you agree that EP offers the tools to help a lawmaker consider the advantages and disadvantages in a particular moment and circumstance to make his choices and avoidances (to pass a law)? And that it gives us the tools to determine whether an existing law is JUST for now, or for a given time?

Yes, BUT! It doesn't just give those tools to a "lawmaker" it gives the same tools to everyone including the people living under the laws. And while you can definitely provide innumerable examples of agreements ("laws") that people might choose to live by, the issue is that not everyone will agree that those laws/agreements are advantageous to them, and their analysis can be every bit as based on Epicurean principles as can the lawgiver's.

The problem we are having is not the issue of saying that Epicurean philosophy does not have immediate practical application. The problem we are having is that we are talking (at least in hypothetical terms) about a "Society of Epicurus" rather than a "Society of Republican Epicureans" or a "Society of Democrat Epicureans" or a "Society of Tory Epicureans" or a "Society of Labor Epicureans."

If you were suggesting that you were forming a "Society of Vegetarian Epicureans" then I think it would be exactly proper to cite as a ground rule that the members of the society find the killing of animals so abhorrent / painful that as a premise of membership they agree never to kill any animal (except maybe in self defense). That would make perfect sense and I would think have no conflict with any Epicurean principle.

But there could just as easily be a "Society of Epicurean Carnivores" that makes a condition of membership being to advance the cause of eating meat / living keto style, due to the pleasures and health benefits they perceive to result.

Both of the opposite extremes could be perfectly organizable in Epicurean terms.

So our issue of disagreement is that as a philosophy, the philosophy does not justify or condemn any personal preference of pleasure as intrinsically superior or inferior than another, and to suggest that it does undermines the philosophy at its core.

Catherine Wilson does that to a relative extreme, and I certainly see that you have distanced yourself from that, but I don't see you embracing the full implication to the point of being

willing to make your society distinct from the "absolutist" ideas that are inherent in humanism, stoicism, etc. By failing to make that distinction you're inviting the watering down of the philosophy, and I tend to think that watering down by later Epicureans was perhaps as much to blame for the fall in popularity as was the affirmative suppression by Abrahamic religion.

Until Norman DeWitt hardly anyone recognized Epicurus as such a strong anti-Platonist, and significant numbers of people today seem to have no problem combining Epicurus with supernatural religion, stoicism, and all sorts of other ideas that are fundamentally contradictory.