

Fixed or Unfixed

Post by “Hiram” of January 6, 2020 at 11:41 AM

[Quote from Oscar](#)

Epicureanism: Fixed Once For All

... “...another great fault (of Epicurus) was that of dictatorial dogmatism. His followers had to learn a kind of creed embodying his doctrine, which they were not allowed to question; to the end none of them added or modified anything...when Lucretius later turned Epicurus’ Philosophy into poetry, he added, so far as can be judged, nothing theoretical to the masters teaching (it appears [Cassius](#) is right about Lucretius remaining true to Epicurus).” [Hiram](#)

General disinterest for science

[Elayne](#) ..."Epicurus has no interest in science on its own account, he values it solely as providing naturalistic explanations of phenomena which superstition attributes to agency of the gods. When there are several possible naturalistic explanations, he holds that there is no point in trying to decide between them... it is no wonder that the Epicureans contributed practically nothing to natural knowledge."

Charge of Hypocrisy

If Epicurus said “The honour paid to a wise man is a great good for those who honour him” but didn’t himself repay those to whom he was intellectually indebted; like his teacher who he called “the mollusk”, Democritus, etc... That sounds like dishing out advice he doesn’t follow himself.

Does anyone know why he hated so strongly the thinkers who actually influenced him? Is this true or are the sources which describe such behaviour by Epicurus not to be trusted?

Edit: my thoughts on the above is that I will respect Epicurus' wishes that his philosophy be unadulterated. I will not seek to infuse my philosophy into Epicureanism as to sell it deceptively as Epicureanism when it really is just my own philosophy. I think we should be cognizant when others may be doing this, and point it out when we see it taking place. I will thus be only contributing to Epicureanism if it is respectful of Epicurus. I think Hiram has a signature sign-off that Epicurus final words were "never forget my teachings" so we should do that and respect the dying Sage's final request. All that now said, I will still focus primarily on the development of my own philosophy,

contributing to philosophy by adding and/or modifying wherever necessary and pleasurable.

edit: the quote by Hiram is "always remember my doctrines" ... which makes sense.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVOvgAy1IC0>

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Yes, most of us believe that Lucretius was true to Epicurus. (The author of "[Ontology of motion](#)" disagrees, if you're interested in reading a counter-point).

Concerning the point that Epicurus had no interest in science for the sake of science, yes he was a philosopher and the role that philosophy plays for science and religion and other human projects is to provide ethical guidance. In his case, he pointed the finger at pleasure. **This is the role of philosophy.** On the one hand, those who are scientism enthusiasts put too much faith in human artifacts instead of nature; on the other hand religious people and anti-science activists want to advance policy that leaves us all at the mercy of unempirical doctrines that impede human progress (think: stem cell and other forms of useful research). So it is important to understand the role of science as producing empirical data, and the role of philosophy as providing moral guidance for how to use this data. This does not mean that someone like Carl Sagan or Richard Dawkins who is in awe of nature and its processes should not or would not find EP useful--on the absolute contrary. Both science and philosophy are necessary, and both have their roles.

Concerning the accusation that Epicurus was hypocritical, that is one possibility, but another one is that (I don't remember the source now, but I remember reading somewhere, maybe in Laertius?, that) "the Mollusk" had a problem with drinking too much wine, which sometimes has the tendency to make people obnoxious. We can't know today what Nausiphanes was like when sober, or when not-sober. But I have a feeling that there was more than a difference of opinions in their proverbial parting argument.

Also, consider that Epicurus arrived very late in the philosophy game, and received many of the arguments that had been previously presented as well as counter-arguments. This allowed him to put his intellect to work with the best benefits possible. He benefited from this, creating a synthesis of impressive maturity of all the most important insights of ancient Greek thought: the atomism of Democritus, the Cyrenaic pleasure ethics. Even his ideal of "ataraxia" was informed by an encounter with Pyrrho, who left a very deep impression on young Epicurus--so that he replaced Democritus' ethical ideal of cheerfulness with "ataraxia". Now, obviously, he did not take in the Skeptic doctrine of Pyrrho, only his demeanor. And he went on synthesizing the best of what he found throughout his life into a philosophy that made progressively more sense.

[Oscar](#) I hope you write a blog detailing your own personal philosophy. (I think everyone should do this, and update it periodically because your views will evolve).

My book TtEG was published in 2014, and a couple of years later I wrote [Six things I learned since writing it](#). Tomorrow is the official publication date of "[How to live a good life](#)", for which I wrote the "Epicureanism chapter" (originally I had wanted to title it "Choices and avoidances" but the editors required that each chapter be titled after the tradition it represents). It contains a 5,000-word essay, which I wrote as if it was my narration of the most updated version of MY outline of Epicurean philosophy. This was extremely useful and allowed me to organize my thoughts. My review of the other chapters in the book will go live tomorrow.