

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

Post by "Cassius" of January 9, 2020 at 10:35 AM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

This is highly probable since the god here is at a complete state of happiness, a reasonable model for Epicureans to live as invisibly as possible the way the God lives invisibly.

I didn't notice this earlier so I have underlined the part I want to comment on: In my personal research and opinion I think the phrase "live unknown" is vastly overblown as indicative of what Epicurus taught. Check the cite and I think you will find that the phrase apparently comes from a Herculaneum scroll with absolutely zero surrounding context to explain how it was being used in that writing.

I know that there are other texts which can be read to indicate that Epicurus advised against careers in public fields where you are constantly at the mercy of the whims of other people, and of course the anti-Epicureans were always accusing Epicurus of not supporting public affairs as he should. But Epicurus certainly did not "live unknown" himself, nor did all of the many other Epicureans we know about, such as Lucretius, or Atticus, or many many others. If you check the opening of Lucretius you see that he is saying that his intended student, Memmius, would / could not in any way desert his public duties at the time of the Roman civil war. And obviously Cassius Longinus saw no conflict between his Epicurean views and being a leader and a general in that war. It's the nature of Epicurean philosophy to talk to other people and teach them and surround ourselves with our friends, and in no way in my view does that translate into a goal of living as invisibly as possible.

I know that "live unknown" is one of the most popular phrases to attach to Epicurus today, but I think the meaning attached to it today is far beyond what Epicurus really meant, and certainly it is not reflective of how he himself lived. And since I don't think Epicurus was a hypocrite in any way, I think it's pretty much absurd to allege as these websites do that Epicurus was advising us essentially to live as hermits.

So I don't think that the Epicureans gods consider that they live invisibly; they simply have no concern about how they appear to humans. Nor should living invisibly be a general high-value goal of Epicureans, except where context leads it to be of advantage. And if someone is finding that "live unknown" is a high-value tactic in their personal situation, that sounds to me like a strong indication that they need to reevaluate their living conditions to see if they can't find some place more friendly to live, as per [PD39](#): " The man who has best ordered the element of

disquiet arising from external circumstances has made those things that he could akin to himself, and the rest at least not alien; but with all to which he could not do even this, he has refrained from mixing, and has expelled from his life all which it was of advantage to treat thus."

My strong suspicion is that many of the commentators who push "live unknown" as Epicurean doctrine are in actuality Stoics / Anti-Epicureans themselves, and they have a personal interest in seeing true Epicureans sit back, shut up, and leave the world of public affairs totally to themselves, so that they can push their own pet "virtue-ethics" projects without opposition. 😊