

# **[Historical Records] from The Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group**

**Post by "Cassius" of May 24, 2015 at 8:49 AM**

**\*\*THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 05/24/2015\*\***

\*\* This is the one hundred and seventh in a series of weekly reports on news from the world of Epicurean Philosophy. Our home base for discussion is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy/>Copies of these posts, and links to active Epicurean websites, are stored at [EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com](http://EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com).

\*\* We welcome all participants and lurkers. If you apply to participate and don't receive a reply promptly, please send an email to an admin about your interest in the group. We are here to discuss Epicurean Philosophy, have fun, and in the words of Lucian, "strike a blow for Epicurus - that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams, who alone had and imparted true insight into the good, and who brought deliverance to all that consorted with him!"

\*\*Some unavoidable traveling yesterday has delayed me in posting this week's update on the Facebook group, but it has given me more time to think about this week's theme. In recent weeks we have had the usual series of excellent posts and discussions, but there has been an uptick in controversy, some of it helpful, and some of it not.

The issue is exemplified in the extensive discussion of my post this week:

"Query: "Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all." Would Epicurus have agreed or disagreed? Why?"<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...32027843512844/>

The question posed here proved to be an excellent way to get to the very deep issues that divide those who are truly and primarily fans of Epicurus from those who are primarily fans of other philosophers. But the real issue is not a matter of labels and schools - the real issue is the deep one that Epicurus addressed directly: "What is the goal of life?" There have always been, and apparently always will be, those who for a variety of reasons wish to attack the goal of living devoted to pleasure, and praise life devoted to pain. As Cicero's Toquatus described them as those who hold: "...this mistaken idea of reprobating pleasure and extolling pain ..."

The enemies of pleasure operate under many frameworks. There is a large contingent that embraces the stoic idea of that goes under the guise of suppressing all emotion, but is really oriented toward suppressing pleasure and encouraging pain. But there is also the spirit of skepticism that lives on in the attitude of eclecticism. These people are so adamantly certain that nothing can be considered true that they insist that there is no need for consistency, no

need for intellectual rigor, and that they can combine by sheer force of will the most contradictory ideas into one grab-bag collection. What unites these two is that both the pure stoics \*and\* the eclectics thrive on the deception of being opaque about their true goals. They extol "happiness" to the skies, and demand that we accept that their goal and their definition of happiness is the same as ours. But if you scratch the surface, the goal of happiness as defined by these people is as drained of pleasure as the surface of the moon.

The pleasures of life can only be purchased at the price of some pain. Epicurean philosophy is devoted to the intelligent application of the facts of reality and human nature to assist us in living with as much happiness as possible, which entails also living with as little pain as possible. But just as with his discussion of "the gods," Epicurus did not write and teach to the "lowest common denominstor." He did not oversimplify the issues and he did not distort his teachings so that even the unwise can understand them. Diogenes Laertius: "However, not every bodily constitution nor every nationality would permit a man to become wise. [VS29](#). "To speak frankly as I study nature I would prefer to speak in oracles that which is of advantage to all men even though it be understood by none, rather than to conform to popular opinion and thus gain the constant praise that comes from the many."

In reading Epicurus on the gods, it is necessary to understand that Epicurus defined "gods" in a non-supernatural way. So when Epicurus said that "gods" exist, he was not talking about the supernatural gods that many people insist on jumping to conclude. If you insist on reading Epicurus superficially, you will totally miss his meaning.

In reading Epicurus on pleasure, it is necessary to understand that Epicurus defined "feeling" as having only two categories - pleasure or pain - and that one's feelings, if not painful, are therefore going to be pleasurable. So when Epicurus talks about the goal of absence of pain, he means pleasure as ordinarily understood, and not some mystical third state of anesthesia that Stoic-minded people embrace and insist on jumping to conclude. Again, if you insist on reading Epicurus superficially, you will totally miss his meaning.

And "insisting on reading Epicurus superficially" is exactly what the majority of pleasure-repressing philosophers have insisted on doing since at least the time of Seneca. "If you can't defeat him, co-opt his words and twist them to support your own" has been their theme for 2000 years. And they have succeeded to the point where it is almost impossible to find a group of people who insist on talking the truth about Epicurean pleasure.

There may be other places I am not aware of, but the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook page, and those sites affiliated with the leadership of this group, are the exceptions. Although we certainly have differences of opinion among ourselves, the unifying theme is that we are rejecting the ascetic view of Epicurus, and we are studying and working to understand once again the pleasure-focused philosophy that is evident when one escapes the jail of the orthodox framework.

We have promoted in the past and will continue to promote in the future honest and constructive discussion of these issues. But we are not going loosen our moderation practices

to allow the enemies of pleasure to conduct in this group their standard campaign of intimidation and misrepresentation. If you have an open mind about the meaning of pleasure, and you truly wish to study Epicurean philosophy to assist yourself in living happily in a way that ordinary people can understand, then you are welcome and encouraged to participate and post in our group.

If your interest in being here is to snipe against pleasure and suppress discussion, then you are *\*not\** welcome to participate. The About Section and Sticky Post of this group will be enforced in a constructive manner to reinforce the goal of the group and to prevent those who disagree with that goal from disrupting it.

Questions like "is it better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all" are of vital interest to everyone. Elli P. in particular, and others as well, gave great responses. They pointed out that in EVERY question, even one as charged as this one, the ultimate answer is always the same. There is no Platonic ideal form, no Aristotelian evaluation of "essences," or looking for "golden means," or "moderation," that answer the question for us. Nor is it possible to succeed in analyzing this question with an eclectic "whatever works" approach which hides the meaning of "works."

Epicurus' doctrine is clear: All pleasure is good, and all questions of what we choose and avoid have to be evaluated according to whether those choices and avoidance bring pleasure or pain. And in the end, since the goal of life is the most possible pleasure AND the least possible pain, only we can evaluate for ourselves how that calculation should be computed.

These are questions and answers that are fundamental to living. Epicurus stood alone against mainstream Greek philosophy with his outlook on answering these questions, and in 2000 years no other school has approached the level of his insight. What people find so hard to understand in many cases is the reason they have failed -- despite their protests about "happiness" -- is that they don't *\*want\** to succeed, because they fundamentally disagree with us that pleasure is desirable for itself.

But pleasure *\*is\** desirable for itself, and the reason that it is so is that Nature has made us that way. If we wish to follow Nature, then we need to study and apply the philosophy of Epicurus. That is what we are working to do in the Epicurean facebook group, and those who share our goal are welcome and encouraged to join us.

*\*\**Thanks to all who participated in the Facebook forum this week. As always, if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please add a comment or participate in the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy/> or hop around the internet world of Epicurean Philosophy by checking the links here: [EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com](http://EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com)

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Live Well!

Cassius Amicus