

How to Talk to Those Raised on Religion / Virtue

Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2018 at 8:11 AM

This is a wide question and I bet others will have lots of perspectives. A thumbnail of my own approach is that I attempt to find some point of common ground to discuss first. For example many people in my area, even the very religious ones, were also raised to respect and admire Thomas Jefferson. So with those, one of the first places I start is to point out that Jefferson's "pursuit of happiness" in the Declaration of Independence wasn't written without a context, and that Jefferson said some really great things about Epicurus.

If Jefferson could get elected president in a very religious country while still holding his Epicurean views, then we can be successful too. It might be, however, that like Jefferson, we have to be very careful with whom we discuss some of the details. No doubt some of the deeper implications should be held for discussion later, and at first only with those of us who are like-minded.

Another much lesser known example, but someone who is fascinating and probably appeals to a different group than Jefferson, is Frances Wright and her pro-Epicurean "[A Few Days In Athens](#) ." She can be held up as a female example of someone who understood and promoted Epicurean philosophy with a great book in a time when most women did not do that kind of thing. In fact that book is a very good starting point for someone who doesn't read a lot of pure philosophy.

On the other hand if the person you're talking to has been studying a lot of philosophy, there's hardly a more prominent friend-of-Epicurus name to drop than Nietzsche. And if the person you're talking to is a communist, you can even cite Karl Marx as someone who was interested in Epicurus! 😊

So I think it is generally possible to start by building some bridges in areas of common ground, then expanding from that.

I want to hear others on this too so anyone reading this thread, please comment!