

The Neglect of Metrodorus' Economics

Post by "Elayne" of February 14, 2020 at 4:04 PM

From your article:

"There is a **natural measure of wealth** (as opposed to the corrupt, cultural measure of wealth), which is tied to natural and necessary desires. Understanding this will provide us with serenity and indifference to profit and loss."

I recommend wealth "necessary for pleasure" ... and I don't advise cultivating "indifference"--that's Stoic. I prefer to retain my feelings as a guide. If I lose all my resources tomorrow, I'm not going to be indifferent.

"2. There is **social wealth** in addition to the wealth of things and possessions."

Social capital is well studied, and many of Epicurus' words refer to the same thing. I agree.

"3. Philodemus plainly stated it: **the philosopher does not toil**. However, we must always remember that toil is evil, not productivity."

You've said similar things in the past-- you like the idea of effortlessnes. I enjoy a lot of activities involving toil. I toiled to give birth, twice, and it wasn't an evil to me. I will toil this weekend helping sick kids feel better, and that's not an evil to me. I find this idea unhelpful. There's no effort after death, nor pleasure. Put pleasure first and you can do effort when you want to.

"4. **Association** is important in labor. We must choose our company prudently." I choose my company according to the hedonic calculus, yes.

"5. **Our revenue** must more than meet our immediate needs: it **must facilitate a dignified life of leisure**." I advise deciding the type of life you enjoy most and then fund it, in addition to funding for emergencies.

"6. It's always prudent to cultivate **multiple streams of income**, among which deriving fees from the Garden's teaching mission, rental property income and business ownership, which includes gainful employment of others, have special priority." I advise giving priority to the types of income stream best suited to give you personal pleasure. No need for someone who doesn't want to be a landlord or business owner to do that. We have NO idea what Metrodorus would advise in today's economic climate. It's risky to extrapolate like that. If everyone in a

group is Epicurean, and they are all advised to rent out property, who is going to be the renter, lol? Who is going to be the employee, if they are supposed to be employers? What if they don't enjoy managing employees? What if they enjoy a paycheck and want to unionize? There are multiple ways to arrange things.

"7. It's also prudent to have fruitful possessions. The various forms of **ownership of means of production** is another way to independence that can potentially relieve us of toil."

I would advise just including that decision in one's hedonic calculus. If you've got an all-Epicurean group, and they all think they've got to each own their means of production and all be owners, they will either stick to very small businesses (because they'd all avoid being employees) or decide to co-own. And if none of them are going to do any work, eventually, then I'm not sure how you apply this on a large scale. This scheme requires a whole bunch of non-Epicureans to do all the toiling, so you probably want to limit who you spread the philosophy to, if you want it to work. ☐☐