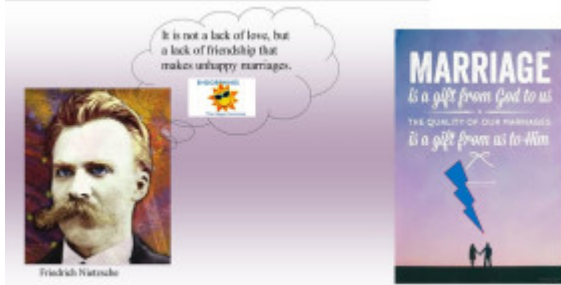


“Love and Marriage, Real Series”

Post by “Elli” of March 30, 2020 at 12:02 PM



Although we are now forced to devote much of our attention to the nature of viruses, and how to prevent or defeat the pain that comes from them, we should also keep in mind the nature of pleasure, the goal for which we endure the possibility viruses and all other kinds of pain.

Just as we study the details of how viruses operate, and how we can minimize our danger from them, we should remember too that pleasure operates through natural mechanisms, and we should study the details of how pleasure operates to maximize our experience of pleasure. One detail of significance is that some pleasures arise from actions which tend to produce the chemical substance known as dopamine, while other pleasurable actions arise from production of serotonin, endorphin, oxytocine, and similar chemicals. There are important advantages in pursuing those pleasures which are connected mainly with the latter category.

Epicurus tells us in Principal Doctrine Ten that we have no grounds to complain about actions we consider to be “depraved” to the extent those actions do in result in pleasure. The key question, however, in evaluating results is to examine what in fact they do produce, because pleasures based on dopamine usually produce addiction, and addition usually produces larger long-term painful consequences for both the individual and society. It was not by sheer coincidence that Dr. Freud and others have observed that religion is the narcotic of the masses.

But rather than focus on generalities, let me tell you about a real person in my own experience who illustrates the point. And this is the same point that Epicurus and Lucretius made when they showed how often false religions, false philosophies, and false educational systems align and unite themselves with false political systems to produce unnecessary and unjustifiable pain.

My story is a true one, and it was told to me by an acquaintance - a doctor - who related to me his life story. I met this man several years ago in the home of a friend, and he told me that he had been born and grown up in Libya, in the era of 70s-80s. At that time there was a law in Libya that granted him a government allowance (and this was under Muammar Gaddafi, for whom it seems PD7 was almost written for directly) for the purpose of studying medicine at any university in Greece. In most cases, this education was part of an undertaking that requires five years for a diploma and then five more years working inside hospitals to acquire the specialty.

Even while this man was telling me his story, he was also praising his country's policy for benefiting both him and Libyan society in helping him to become a doctor of medicine for his people. Yes, he told me, but ... it had taken him almost ten years to get the diploma from the University, instead of five, because he liked playing cards and drinking alcohol - and drinking alcohol was forbidden by the religious laws of his country. Nevertheless, as he told me about his "hobbies" he also praised how nice and free had been his years as a student.

Then, one day after he was almost set to finish his specialty, and to become an ophthalmologist, everything turned upside down in his life when he met a beautiful (but in my view unwise) Greek lady who turned out to be a religious Christian. Thereafter, on the basis of "love and marriage," the two, as a couple, decided to unite their gods to become as one, since, as he also said, the gods of both religions are one and the same, because both have the same patriarch: Abraham.

And here we must say: GOOD GRIEF !

The only prerequisite for marriage that was set by the parents of the Greek lady was that my doctor friend, (who was Islamic) must be baptized as Christian, and take Greek nationality for living permanently in Greece. This they did, and over the years they had a family together and produced three very nice children. Everything to this point looked promising, but remember that he was narrating his story from the beginning, and that there was something that his poor and unwise Greek wife had not noticed when she met him.

My friend went on and told me further than during the time that he was a student of medicine, he had the hobby of playing cards and drinking alcohol --- and this was when he was a student of what? A Student of Medicine. This man's god was the god of a patriarch, by the name Abraham, who allegedly had the power to unite believers and their interests. But was this Abraham and his god strong enough to limit the fear of death, the fear of life, the fear of pain, the fear of slavery, and the like? Did this patriarch or his god teach him properly, or leave him in total ignorance as to how to calculate pleasure and pain wisely, and to know the limits among pleasure and pain, and how to measure the goal of pleasure against the cost in pain, and how to judge wisely both the quality and quantity of both.

At any rate, after this couple's children were born, and during a period of five years when my doctor friend kept up his "hobbies," he was falling deeply into debt with bank credit cards. He had run up, as he said, ten debit cards, each full to their 10,000 euro limit, just for visiting casinos and drinking alcohol. This continued until it grew into a complete disaster. Despite this, with great effort, his Greek wife, who worked in a court as secretary, and through the help of her parents, tried to change her husband's hobbies, keep her family united, and raise her children. As time passed, however, when the children became teenagers, they remembered how from childhood that they did not have a father to support the necessities of family life. The children started to blame their father, and demanded that their mother expel him from home and divorce him. This went on to its logical conclusion - to the point when, as the doctor was telling me his life story, he related that he now lived alone, and he had closed his medical office

due to debt, all of which he blamed on his wife and children.

When my doctor friend finished his story, I could not hold back my Epicurean judgment, and I said to him:

Doctor, would it not be better to blame yourself, since you were the one incapable of curing your troubles of soul and mind?

Would it not be better to blame your stupid patriarch, and his stupid "god," who made you, your wife, and your children fear death, fear life, and fear *everything*, as a result of which all you now feel is pain of both body and soul?

Would it not be better for you to look to Nature more carefully, which is after all what you say that you study, and look for the real causes, and see that the consequences you complain of in reality are the pain that came from your indulging your addiction to visiting casinos and drinking alcohol and leading your family into debt?

You yourself are a doctor, and you cannot even cure yourself from fear? To me, and for all honest scientists and philosophers, religion is like a narcotic, like the opium that produces dopamine. To give in to this narcotic is like those who drink water without eliminating their thirst.

But the pleasures that you experience as coming from serotonin, endorphin, and oxytocine etc are those which you derive from treating your patients, from the study of the science of medicine, from raising your children, from your wife who is the mother of your children, and from the many other activities that lead to love, respect, honor, and admiration from your family members, which is all healthy things grow, whether they are part of a healthy body or a healthy society.

At this point our discussion ended, but not before I told him where he could find information about Epicurus and my Epicurean friends. It has been years since I saw him, but I learned recently that he was back and united with his family again. I do not know whether he took my advice about the doctrines of Epicurus and his philosophy to heart, or if they helped him become united again with his family, but I still hope so!

Elli Pensa

March 5th 2020

It is not a lack of love, but a lack of friendship that makes unhappy marriages.

ENDORPHINES
The happy hormone

MARRIAGE
is a gift from God to us

THE QUALITY OF OUR MARRIAGES
is a gift from us to Him

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1502-love-and-marriage-real-series/?postID=7350#post7350>

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