

10-Minute Talk Given at Library Conference: Epicurean Librarians and Stoics in the Stacks

Post by "Cassius" of April 5, 2020 at 6:20 AM

1 - Wow that is great work on looking for appearances of the word eudaimonia. I know Elli and I have discussed this several times and I think that she largely feels the way you do about the word.

2 - My concern, or maybe better stated as lack of commitment to emphasizing that word, stems from the first point, which is the discussion of whether everyone can reach "the goal." Yes I very much agree with you that the Epicurean "way of life" is for everyone, and is at least in some sense achievable by everyone. The reason I hesitate to describe it as "reaching the goal" is the implication that has been drummed into us that there is a single goal or a single set of achievements in life that can be met by everyone. I am of course getting into the issue of all sorts of desirable things, such as long life, many friends, large family/circle, good health, etc etc that not everyone is going to succeed in doing. I would say that poor health or many other unfortunate circumstances do not prevent them from pursuing the same goal, and from in a strong sense achieving it by living prudently in the pursuit of pleasure, but I also think it's important to stress that those who do not have the most supportive circumstances should still follow Epicurean philosophy. Perhaps this is why Jefferson's phrase "pursuit of happiness" is in fact more sound than "happiness."

I feel sure that this understanding of "pursuit" was implicit in Epicurus and that you and he and I would agree on this.

Ha now I remember this point - that I also have an aversion to using untranslated Greek words as if there is no adequate English translation. Maybe I sound like Cicero here, but I think everyone must internalize the philosophy in their own language and understanding in order to be able to apply it properly, so I don't like to talk about a goal using a word that is meaningless or confusing to most people, especially since there is such debate over what the word means.

[Quote from Eugenios](#)

Epicurus saw eudaimonia as equivalent to leading a joyous, pleasant, and complete life

So that's why when I discuss the Epicurean goal of life I like to describe it as "a joyous, pleasant, and complete life" rather than as "eudaimonia" or having a good demon, or a good spirit 😊

As usual I don't think we are very far apart at all, and I realize that my view here is just personal preference.