

## Thoughts and Concerns in Chapter 2

Post by "Cassius" of April 13, 2020 at 8:34 AM

As far as Arnobius, Lactantius, and Augustine, I read the essence of the criticism to be that you are saying that DeWitt implies that they "had Epicurean affinities." I don't recall in my reading of DeWitt that this was confusing - everyone knows that the early "fathers" were bitter enemies of Epicurus, and DeWitt is just making the point that they sometimes expressed grudging respect for Epicurean social values. I did not come away from these references thinking that DeWitt was over the line or confusing the points, both of which (they were bitter enemies; they respected certain non-theological aspects) would appear to be true.

As far as a sound mind in sound body I thought I remember DeWitt saying explicitly that this phrasing does not occur, but that it is a logical implication of Epicurean philosophy, which it certainly seems to me to be. I wouldn't doubt also that Juvenal could sound Stoic, as I have not read him in detail, but I do not think that Juvenal's being of mixed mind would undercut DeWitt's point. Were it not for DeWitt stressing the differences between Epicurus and the Stoics, as he does throughout the book, many readers of Epicurus would be stuck in the modern "they're essentially the same" mindset.

As far as persuading "human nature" rather than nature" I recall that section being rather clear too, that he was making the point that Nature has no mind and is thus not something that can logically be persuaded, but that "human nature" is the sum of individual human minds and thus is the only logical meaning of a reference to "persuading."

-----

In general sum at the moment I do want to say that I do think it is great that you are writing up these concerns in detail and I think it will be a valuable contribution to address any and all of them, so thank you! By no means do I think that the DeWitt book is perfect so it is helpful to be able to discuss and look into all details. The value of the DeWitt book is not that it is perfect, but that it raises issues and arguments that are almost totally excluded from contemporary writing about Epicurus. We just have to read and judge for ourselves how much value those arguments have. As for me, they are hugely valuable, and made the difference between my writing off Epicurus as a passive decadent, as I read Nietzsche to have done, vs. reading him as a philosophical and social revolutionary, worthy of deep and extensive study, as DeWitt saw him. Quite possibly it depends on one's background as to how one reacts to DeWitt's interest in comparing Epicurus with Christianity. My personal background led me to find his "St Paul and Epicurus" very interesting and helpful, but ultimately the implications of Epicurus far transcend the issue of whether early Christians viewed Epicurus as an antichrist. On this I take the side I perceive DeWitt and Nietzsche both to be on, which is that Epicurus was aggressively battling

in pre-existing forms the worst corruptions that plague human existence, and that it is the opposite of the truth to see Epicurus as essentially leading a bunch of elderly people in a nursing home justifying their having wasted their lives by fancying that they should be satisfied with a cave, bread, water, and a couple of friends (the modern non-DeWitt consensus).