

[Historical Records] from The Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group

Post by “Cassius” of July 18, 2015 at 8:45 PM

****THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 07/11/2015****

** This is the one hundred and fourteenth in a series of weekly reports on news from the world of Epicurean Philosophy. Our home base for discussion is <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy> Copies of these posts, and links to active Epicurean websites, are stored at EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com, and other discussion cites are referenced at the end of this post.

** We welcome all participants and lurkers. If you apply to participate and don't receive a reply promptly, please send an email to an admin about your interest in the group. We are here to discuss Epicurean Philosophy, have fun, and in the words of Lucian, “strike a blow for Epicurus – that great man whose holiness and divinity of nature were not shams, who alone had and imparted true insight into the good, and who brought deliverance to all that consorted with him!”

** The attention of Greece and its friends around the world continues to center on the financial crisis. Before linking to our major posts on that subject, this is a good time to remember that while Epicurean philosophy provides the essential basis for analyzing questions like this properly, it does not at all guarantee that each of us will reach the same answers. In the civil war that tore apart the Roman Republic, Caesar's father-in-law, and perhaps Caesar himself, were identified as holding at least some Epicurean views, while Cassius Longinus, one of the prime leaders of the rebellion, was also Epicurean. Any review of the last ten [principal doctrines](#) of Epicurus reveals that it is a bedrock principal that there is no “absolute justice,” and that “justice” is going to differ with time and place and people involved. That's because there *is* no absolute standard of “right” and “wrong” that applies everywhere and at all times. Each person is born with life, “free will,” and the faculty of pleasure and pain, and it is only by this faculty of pleasure that anyone knows that which is truly desirable for him.

Epicurus said, “For I at least do not even know what I should conceive the good to be, if I eliminate the pleasures of taste, and eliminate the pleasures of sex, and eliminate the pleasures of listening, and eliminate the pleasant motions caused in our vision by a visible form.” This means that “the good” does not exist in a divine dictate from the gods; nor does it exist in some ideal platonic form in another dimension. “The good” for each of us is what our own faculty of pleasure tells us is pleasing to us in our own experience. Individual experiences are going to differ dramatically, and it is to be expected that different people will pursue their own desires in different ways.

So in my view, it is not possible to say that a devoted Epicurean would want to agree with the Troika and preserve the existing Greek status in the European Union, any more than it is possible to say that a devoted Epicurean would wish to exit the Euro, start printing drachmas, and follow a totally new course. Each of us have our views on which course would be best. But here is where I think it IS possible to say something about an Epicurean viewpoint, and how the Epicurean would be distinguished from other viewpoints.

It is core Epicurean doctrine that Gods do not interfere with our lives, and death is nothingness to us. That means that THIS life is all we have; that we are not going to heaven or hell after death, and that if we are going to experience any joy and delight it is going to be in THIS lifetime. And thus we must live our lives to the fullest possible to us - as we have no other. We must "seize the day."

In contrast to this, a fascinating article was posted this past week entitled "Putting the Greek Back in Stoicism." It was linked and discussed in our group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...52929258089369/> Reading the article is extremely enlightening for what it suggests the Greeks should do in this time of crisis. If you've ever wanted an example of the "stick-your-head-in-the-sand" attitude at the bottom of Stoicism, this is a good article to see it. It makes a couple of platitudinous points which are worth pointing out, with comment:

- Focus on things you can control - get over things that you cannot control <<< "Get over them" means what? forget about them? Epicurus advises study of all issues, including death and the gods.
- Bear in mind that things could have been worse << Nothing I can find about thinking about things being worse... Instead, the focus is on action to create a better life: "[PD16](#). Chance seldom interferes with the wise man; his greatest and highest interests have been, are, and will be, directed by reason throughout his whole life."
- Learn self-control through occasional acts of self-denial. << And this one again confuses a tool "selfcontrol" with the end - pleasure. Learning self control for the sake of self control leads in a circle to nothing. And in the meantime, the supposed wisdom of the men cited in the article is NOT leading toward happiness in any ordinarily understandable version of that term as related to pleasurable living. Instead, if you listen to them, the goal is as far from pleasure as one could hope to find.

Even when sanitized in modern jargon, the poison is still there - buried just beneath the surface. Instead of "study nature and learn to live pleasantly" the emphasis is on "close your eyes and you're one step closer to complete anesthesia."

A similar list posted in another link can be used to illustrate the same point. In a video entitled "The Secrets of Happiness" we see "happiness" as defined by someone who is focusing on the absence of pain, rather than the pursuit of pleasure. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...55227731192855/>

I summarized these, again with comment, in the following list:

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/27-historical-records-from-the-epicurean-philosophy-facebook-group/?postID=76#post76>

1) "Stop being so hopeful - expect that most things are going to go wrong." No. Focus on pleasant living as your goal, act intelligently and rationally to deal with your circumstances and attain the pleasure that is possible and that can be gained without excessive pain, and in ****most**** cases (not all) you have reasonable grounds for confidence of success.

2) "Stop ranting about how awful other people are - most annoying people aren't evil, they're just anxious or sad." Another prescription for disaster. Look at people realistically, and see whether in fact they are "having a bad day" or they belong to ISIS.

3) "Think of death a lot. Keep a skull on your desk." Ridiculous,. There is no point in being morbid. Think of death AS appropriate - which is when you need to remember that life is short, that your time is important, and that the time you waste spouting platitudes like this list is gone forever..

4)"Laugh at yourself - think of yourself as a loveable fool." See response to item 3. Laughing is appropriate, but taking your life unseriously is not. it's the only one you have.

5) "Talk to yourself - ask yourself what you really want." This one is arguably decent but if you work to ground yourself in a firm philosophy like Epicurus advised, it won't be so necessary to reinvent the wheel every time something even a little bad happens.

6) "Stop trying to make yourself happy. It's impossible. Make others happy." Pure Stoicism. Happiness isn't important, and the implication is that it is bad to pursue it.

7) "Look at yourself from outer space. From this height all your problems are small." In other words, look at yourself from the perspective of a non-existent god or a non-existent Platonist philosopher king. You, and your problems, are nothing in the "great scheme of things." The trouble is, as Epicurus pointed out, there IS no "great scheme" of things. Your life is all you have, and if you don't deal with your problems intelligently, and not by minimizing them, you lose the only life you have.



"Throw your phone off a cliff." Another veiled suggested to drop out, tune out, and turn off. And why not, when you have an eternity in heaven after you're dead? Or, from the perspective of this video, you're a worm anyway that is of total insignificance, so who cares what you learn on the phone.

9) "Give up the idea that you should be normal. Everyone one is weird, and that's totally ok." In other words, it's totally Ok if your neighbor joins ISIS.

These are the Secrets of HAPPINESS? Not for a minute. They are the secrets of manipulating others into thinking you are praising happiness while you are in truth preaching asceticism, austerity, self-denial, pain, and the renunciation of every bit of pleasure that life calls you to pursue.

So to return to the theme of this introduction, I think it is entirely possible for someone of Epicurean disposition to look at his or her situation within Greece and reach entirely different conclusions as to what direction will lead to maximum net pleasure for them. But whichever choices an Epicurean makes, he or she should pursue them with vigor and every weapon of intellect available, because life is short, the night is long, and for all the rest of eternity we experience nothing. As Horace said, we must "seize the day."

****In other posts this week:**

**** Hiram posted to "Meditation changes your brain for the better"**
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...53925201323108/>and "depression makes your

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/27-historical-records-from-the-epicurean-philosophy-facebook-group/?postID=76#post76>

brain smaller”<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...53925681323060/>

** Hiram also posted “Cosma Raimondi – The Rebirth of Epicurean Fervor”
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...53925681323060/>And speaking of Cosma Raimondi, I posted on him as well:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...54324044616557/>

** The Society of Epicurus posted an interesting link on “Are you sure you’re an epicure?”
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...54297894619172/>

** I posted an article entitled “The Real Troika”
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...54403071275321/>

** Hiram posted “Cultivating the Mind of An Epicurus”
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...55137464535215/>

** Hiram posted another “welcome new members” thread, which we encourage all new members to participate in:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...55571464491815/>

** Our latest discussions on the Greek crisis took place mostly here:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...55149411200687/>

**Hiram posted to an interesting article on “Proposing an Objective Morality”
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...56141804434781/>

**Thanks to all who participated the the Facebook forum this week. As always, if you have any comments, questions, or suggestions, please add a comment or participate in the Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group<https://www.facebook.com/groups/EpicureanPhilosophy/> or hop around the internet world of Epicurean Philosophy by checking the links here:
EpicurusCentral.wordpress.com

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Live Well!

Cassius Amicus

**Options for those who wish to discuss Epicurus on the internet include:

1- If you are someone whose views are fully formed, and you’ve combined several disparate viewpoints into your own personal mix, and you mainly want to talk casually to other people of the same eclectic type, there are several excellent facebook groups including EPISTOBUZEN and “Epicureanism for Modern Times” that you can find by searching facebook.

2- If you are focused primarily on Epicurus, and you want to participate in a forum where people will defend Epicurus strongly from all challenges, then you have two Facebook options. Our open and main group, entitled simply “Epicurean Philosophy,” is the home base of this post. Anyone can read the posts there, and all you have to do is ask in order to join. (Note that there is an “About” and a “Sticky” post with our forum rules.)

3 - If you prefer to post in a “private” group where your posts are not readable by outsiders, we have “Epicurean Private Garden.” Because it is a private group, you cannot find it by searching, and you have to email one of our admins in the open group if you wish to join. Please note that our About and Sticky Post rules in the private forum are the same as the open forum, and the private forum will be moderated to the same standards as the open forum (or perhaps slightly tighter!)

4 - If you are not only focused primarily on Epicurus, but you wish to assist with a forum platform where pro-Epicurean activists can build for the future, check out

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/27-historical-records-from-the-epicurean-philosophy-facebook-group/?postID=76#post76>

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/> Work is starting on a FAQ and other resources. Anyone can read the posts, but only approved members can create new posts or comment.