

Classification of Epicurean Philosophy

Post by “Joshua” of June 29, 2020 at 1:52 PM

There are a few different ways to go about this. Here's an effort at concision; Epicurean Philosophy is a *practical* philosophy whose end is pleasure, rooted in a *theoretical* philosophy whose ground is materialism. Epicurus believed that both aspects of his philosophy were discoverable through an epistemology of sensation, feeling, and anticipation—an epistemology that was therefore not strictly empirical.

The Epicurean system attained to the best synthesis of practical and theoretical philosophy in the classical world, with every part of his system reinforcing the structure of the whole. His system was the first 'world-philosophy', a philosophy that spoke to the condition of every human on Earth. Plato developed refined (even if absurd) metaphysical theories, and made a complete muddle of their practical relevance. Stoicism offered a rigid and attractively self-aggrandizing behavioral code, founded on an indistinct and indefinable metaphysic. Epicurus laid out a system that satisfied both.

And this, I think, is why DeWitt sees in Christian theology a pallid and shimmering reflection of Epicureanism. It was a world-philosophy, open to all; it answered, or tried to answer, to the philosophical needs of Man's total nature. Augustine's dream of a theology that was complete and unalterable, insofar as such a dream was ever realized, is still the most serious rival to our system.

What I'm really saying is that the important thing to understand about Epicurean philosophy is that it *is* a *system*. You will find other materialists, and you will find empiricists; Charles can put you on the trail of many notable and interesting hedonists, and many of them drew their inspiration from Epicurus and Lucretius.

But—if you dare!—go where the fighting is thickest. The intricate architecture of Christian theology is the best possible foil for the study of Epicurus, and important to study in it's own right.

Joshua