

[Historical Records] from The Epicurean Philosophy Facebook Group

Post by "Cassius" of August 8, 2015 at 9:44 PM

****THIS WEEK IN EPICUREAN PHILOSOPHY - 08/08/2015****

** This is the one hundred and eighteenth 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!"

** We've just finished another full week with many excellent posts. Before I dive into them, let me remind everyone that there is a good reason why posts in our Epicurean Philosophy Group forum frequently contain, and generate, heated commentary. The orthodox mainstream viewpoint is that Epicurus fits neatly into a consensus in which general attitudes such as "knowing oneself" and "moderation" and "happiness" are the best that Greek philosophy has to offer. Epicurus is held to be just another in a line from Socrates to Plato to Aristotle and through the Stoics who held heated debates on details, but rarely strayed from these same fundamentals.

Read about him in any generalist article on the internet, and you will find Epicurus portrayed as a teach of asceticism in the Stoic mold, whose main contribution was to apply an unusual definition of "pleasure" to mean nothing more than "absence of pain." This view reduces Epicurus to an unimportant footnote who deserves nothing more than a mild appreciation for his ability to turn a phrase, such as "[death is nothing to us](#)." And we are to understand that this phrase is a neat contribution because, to be perfectly blunt, "EVERYTHING" is really "nothing" to us. And that's because ****all**** moderns and ancient Greeks agree that by employing "reason" we can rise about the pain of ordinary life and aspire to a higher world of nobility through thought alone.

The regular posters in this group know that these generalities are far off base, and they have taken it upon themselves to understand how these distortions arose and respond with a more authentic interpretation of Epicurus. Many (but not all) of us have come to this viewpoint

through studying the work of Norman DeWitt. DeWitt, who is all but written out of school by the society of modern commentators, provided a radically different interpretation through his "Epicurus and His Philosophy." Since its publication in the late 1950's, DeWitt's book has provided new generations of students of Epicurus the sort of guide to understanding Epicurean philosophy which has not existed in readily-available form since the ancient world.

For those of us who have followed DeWitt's lead and begun to see how Epicurus differs from the ancient and modern consensus, it is not sufficient to smile and nod and link to the babbling of pop psychologists about "happiness" and "pleasure" who fail to provide clear definitions of those terms. Our arguments are often aimed against ancient and modern Stoics, because the Stoics were the first to attack Epicurus and systematize the arguments against "pleasure." But casual readers should understand that "Stoicism" is best understood as a general umbrella term with several common characteristics. It is a common attitude that has always existed, from the ancient world to today, and it is the very opposite of the Epicurean viewpoint.

When we refer to "Stoicism," what we are really referring to is any attitude that holds the following:

- that pleasure is the enemy of good living;
- that empty words like "virtue" can be the goal of life without further need for definition;
- that "fate" governs everything in the lives of men, to which the best response we can give is to seek to mentally deny the reality of pain;
- that the universe is governed by a supernatural overlord, call it gods or "divine fire" which is the source of all meaning in the universe.

It is **helpful**, but not necessary, to identify that these ideas have their roots in Ancient Stoicism. But it is **necessary** to identify, as Epicurus did, that these ideas are the mortal enemy of living in accord with the path Nature has set for all living things: the pursuit of mental and bodily pleasure.

The world is full of enemies of the Epicurean view of life, and we cannot hope to succeed in living the full pleasurable life that is possible to us unless we identify these enemies and gird ourselves against their attacks. Just as the fear of gods and the fear of death have plagued humanity throughout the ages, the "fear" of pleasure and of pain, and the consequences that occur when they are handled unintelligently, are tremendous obstacles to living the best life that is possible to us. All of these fears must be confronted and overcome.

The theme which unites the regular posters who defend Epicurus in this group is their devotion to living according to Nature. What they see in Epicurus was a pathbreaking leader who blazed the trail we are now following, and who deserves credit, respect, and thanks for his work. In addition to appreciating Epicurus, and for the same reasons, I appreciate the efforts of everyone here who work to present and defend the fundamentals of Epicurean philosophy. We all profit from the work going on here, and I urge new readers to join us in the fight to

rediscover the truth about Epicurean philosophy.

Now for news from the week:

**Hiram posted on "Stages of Development in Hedonist Spirituality"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...65457326836562/>

**In the first of series of excellent graphics this week, Elli posted a graphic analogizing Epicurean and Stoic "vases." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...65924240123204/>

**Elli also posted on the Epicurean attitude toward "isms" and political ideology.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...65260430189585/>

**Elli posted on Epicurus' commentary on sexual relations.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...66642740051354/>

**Elli posted on Metrodorus' saying about going to death "crying aloud in a glorious triumph song that we have lived well" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...66776746704620/>

**Elli posted on an excerpt from Dimitris Liantinis book "Ta Hellinika"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...66903776691917/>

**Hiram started a thread welcoming new members. We urge all new members to say hello and identify themselves: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...65360206846274/>

**Elli posted on the amusing story of Thesmopolis the Stoic
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67305559985072/>

**Elli posted on Epicurean Self-Sufficiency as discussed by Dr. Christos Yapijakis
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67301166652178/>

**Elli posted a graphic contrasting Zeno and Epicurus on the issue of fate:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...66797926702502/>

**Alexander R. posted on scientific findings about horses and their facial expressions
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67499989965629/>

**Elli posted on a possible bust of Idomeneus of Lampsacus
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67729483276013/>

**Elli posted an excerpt from Carl Sagan on the Ionian school (of which Epicurus was a part)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67722993276662/>

**Elli posted an illustrative story on friendship.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...67551743293787/>

**Elli posted a graphic on Metrodorus' saying about only being born once.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...68079576574337/>

**Elli posted on the "babbling" comment recorded in the Bible as stated by Epicureans (and stoics) against "St Paul". <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...68238639891764/>

**Thanks to all who participated in 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/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.