

Can an octopus be an Epicurean?

Post by “Don” of July 14, 2020 at 5:56 AM

[Godfrey](#) : Thanks for finding that article! Interesting reading! I found these pages very reminiscent of Epicureanism:

Quote

More physical activity (to build endurance); prayer or meditation (which calms the body and reduces pain); gratitude (an antidote to the pain-intensifying effects of anger and resentment); and a network of friends and family. “The best single thing I can do to prepare for pain is surround myself with a loving community who will stand by me when tragedy strikes,” Brand notes. He also says Americans need to embrace pain as a friend: “We silence pain when we should be straining our ears to hear it; we eat too fast and too much and take a seltzer; we work too long and too hard and take a tranquilizer. “Perhaps because I have had to repair so many physical problems caused by overindulgence, I take a long-term view of pleasure. [For example], gluttony may give short-term pleasure, [but] it sows the seed for future disease and pain. Hard work and exercise, which may seem like pain in the short term, paradoxically lead to pleasure in the longer term.”

I liked his characterization of pain and pleasure working together and seeing value in pain. Epicurus, too, while obviously valuing pleasure, seemed to see pain as a valuable stop signal and our awareness of it is part of our choice/avoidance process.

i found the latter paragraph reminding me of PD 10.

On the other hand, I didn't agree with this:

Quote

“In Italy for 30 years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed--but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they have brotherly love, 500 years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? “The cuckoo clock.”

This is the same fallacy of people saying Van Gogh was a tortured soul but how fortunate we are to have his artwork. No. If Van Gogh could have been treated and lived a pleasurable life free from mental illness, we could do without the sunflowers and starry nights. And Switzerland had not exactly had 500 years of democracy and peace. Napoleon had control of the Helvetic Republic in the 1800s, there have been internal conflict, but this Wikipedia excerpt makes me

think the Swiss might be doing okay:

Quote

The sovereign state is one of the most developed countries in the world, with the highest nominal wealth per adult and the eighth-highest per capita gross domestic product. It ranks at or near the top in several international metrics, including economic competitiveness and human development. Zürich, Geneva and Basel have been ranked among the top ten cities in the world in terms of quality of life, with Zürich ranked second globally. In 2019, IMD placed Switzerland first in attracting skilled workers. World Economic Forum ranks it the 5th most competitive country globally.

And the Swiss have done okay in the arts and humanities, too, with Giacometti, Herman Jesse, etc., etc. And, oh yeah, they also gave us the Red Cross.

Sorry, my Swiss ancestry is showing a little in that last part there 😊