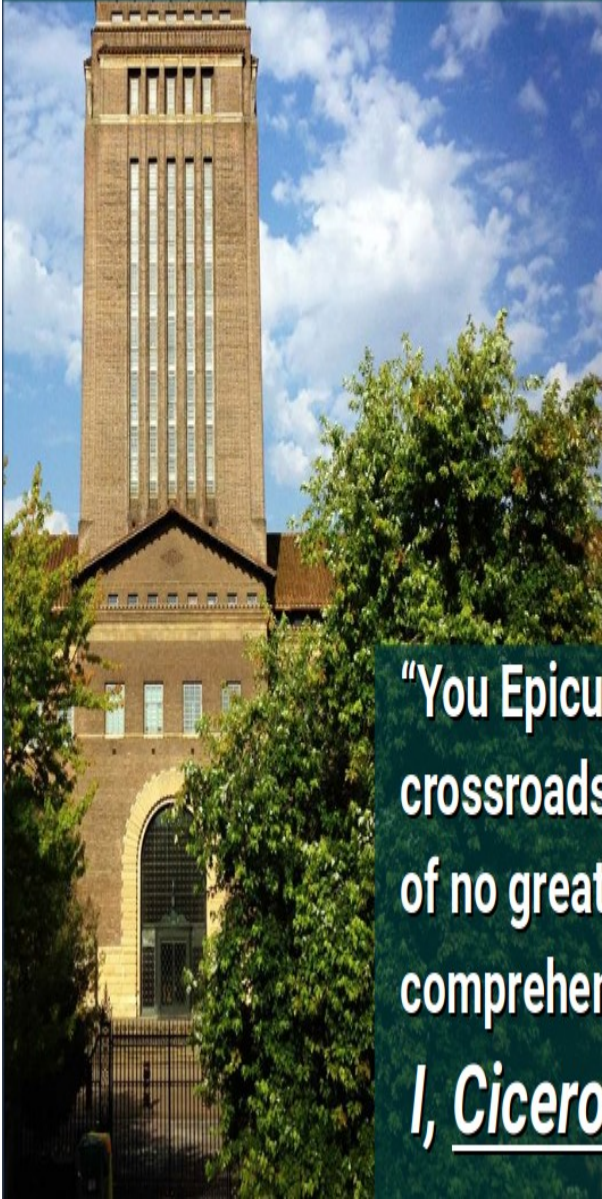


I Am Firmly Convinced That The Future of Epicurean Philosophy Won't Be Found In The Ivory Tower

Post by "Cassius" of October 18, 2019 at 7:41 AM

And that we need to look for it and build it where Cicero saw it flourishing:

When We Look For Epicurus In The Ivory Tower, We Look in The Wrong Place



“You Epicureans round up people from all the crossroads, decent men, I allow, but certainly of no great education. Do such as *they*, then, comprehend what Epicurus means, while *I, Cicero, do not?*”

Post by “Charles” of October 18, 2019 at 11:59 AM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1227-i-am-firmly-convinced-that-the-future-of-epicurean-philosophy-won-t-be-found-in/>

While not to tarnish the value of academia, it has consistently been used as the meeting place of platonic pretentiousness & misrepresentation of any philosophy outside its tunnel vision.

That being said, through outreach and continuing our own Epicurean studies & pursuits we can help round up all decent people like Cicero said.

Post by “Cassius” of October 18, 2019 at 1:03 PM

Yep that is the point! And Cicero himself is a perfect example.

Also to be fair to Academia, promoting a particular philosophy is not their chosen role - they are theoreticians (at best) and they aren't paid to worry about what people do with their information.

Post by “Cassius” of October 18, 2019 at 1:15 PM

Also, before we take the analogies too far, this post is not to suggest that I think that no one at Cambridge understands Epicurus. I particularly like to recommend the work of David Sedley, for just one example. The point is a more general one, that the more specialized the person becomes as a professional philosopher, the more it seems they tend to find Epicurus mystifying or objectionable. When in fact "regular people" who are not academically trained (not "eggheads" in other words 😊) often embrace Epicurus and find that he makes perfectly good sense. That seems to have been Cicero's observation in ancient Rome, and I don't think times have changed much.

Post by “Elayne” of October 18, 2019 at 6:26 PM

Lol, this continues to be hard for me, although I now fully understand the absolute ridiculousness of the current academic position on Epicurus and that your criticism is applying to philosophy departments.

It pushes a button with me because the same words "ivory tower academics" have been used at me by physicians who commit malpractice by ordering useless tests and prescribing harmfully (eg, antibiotics for viral colds). Although I have a PhD as well as an MD, and I practiced on a med school faculty for many years, I also used the same science based medicine approach in private practice, and it works very well. Satisfied patients. We didn't have special model ivory tower patients, lol.

And despite having worked in academics, I figured out most of this philosophy on my own ☐☐.

When it comes to living, are any of us truly in an ivory tower?? I think not. We all face similar human issues.

My inclination is not to blame this turn of perspective on the choice of studying and teaching philosophy as a career but on specific individuals in the ivory tower who have gained power and are misleading folks badly. The "expert cascade" is a real thing. Eventually, the towers themselves need to be taken back from those wrongheaded people, so they can function effectively. Academic departments in every field can go south that same way, but they can also do a great job introducing students to thoughts they never learned at home. If it were not for universities, my parents might have remained Southern Baptists.

TLDR: We need DeWitts in the towers.

Post by “Joshua” of October 18, 2019 at 6:51 PM

I share your reservations, Elayne. Mostly, in my case, because academia is the favored bogeyman among a large group of people for whom the factual age, shape, and making of the world is "just a theory".

I spent four years in a University (undergoing "indoctrination", I have no doubt 😊), and knew nearly every one of the professors in my acquaintance to have been intelligent, serious, curious, decent and well-meaning.

That being said, I agree with Cassius on the main point. If we can't make headway among the common man, we will have failed of our purpose.

Post by "Cassius" of October 18, 2019 at 7:44 PM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

And despite having worked in academics, I figured out most of this philosophy on my own ☹️.

That is the point ! DESPITE!!! 😊

Post by "Elayne" of October 18, 2019 at 7:46 PM

☹️☹️☹️

Post by "Elayne" of October 18, 2019 at 7:47 PM

I meant that as a tongue in cheek "despite" lol! ☹️

Post by "Cassius" of October 18, 2019 at 7:47 PM

Ah I know I am pushing buttons and can be perceived to be on the wrong side -- even "anti-intellectual" !!

But I perceive that there has been an unholy alliance among Academia and Religion for far too long, and it is time to smash those chains that hold the tight-barred gate that separate us from Nature! 😊

And if that means that we have to challenge EVERYTHING that we were ever taught, then we need to be prepared to do it -- and right now other than those things which we learn by Nature - which seems to be the direction that Epicurus was pointing - I don't think we can trust *anything* that we can't verify for ourselves, and then deduce to be true through our reasoning -- starting with reasoning like "nothing comes from nothing" or "goes to nothing"

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Post by “Cassius” of October 18, 2019 at 7:51 PM

For 2000 years these guys have been in control of "Academia." And did THEY lead us toward Epicurus, or did we find him largely ourselves, and with the assistance of one professor in a god-forsaken very COLD country? 😊

Who looks as if he is more at home on a farm than in an ivory tower?



Post by “Cassius” of October 18, 2019 at 8:09 PM

More: This is definitely a thread of reasoning that does not need to go in the wrong direction, but it is still HUGE: the divergence between "reason" and "feeling/sensations" is at the heart of the opposition between Epicurus and the other Greeks. And it fits well within the scope of the recent discussion we have been having about "the gods" --- the recurring question is how we deal with issues about which we don't have all the direct evidence we would like to have.

We can invest our trust in "logic" and "words" and "concepts" or we can draw the line at their limit -- which is that they can't take us further than ultimately can be tied back to our sensations and feelings. But that is exactly what the lure of "reason" calls us toward -- to think that we can go further than nature and totally create our own reality, rather than working to reshape the reality around us to the extent we are able -- not forcing nature, but persuading her, in the words of the text.

Academia can be great, or it can turn into "priests of reason" which is just as oppressive as priest of the purely religious kind.

Post by “Cassius” of October 18, 2019 at 8:10 PM

The ending of the Torquatus narrative in On Ends has always rung bell after bell with me since the first time I read it:

XXI. If then the doctrine I have set forth is clearer and more luminous than daylight itself; if it is derived entirely from Nature's source; if my whole discourse relies throughout for confirmation on the unbiased and unimpeachable evidence of the senses; if lisping infants, nay even dumb animals, prompted by Nature's teaching, almost find voice to proclaim that there is no welfare but pleasure, no hardship but pain—and their judgment in these matters is neither sophisticated nor biased—ought we not to feel the greatest gratitude to him who caught this utterance of Nature's voice, and grasped its import so firmly and so fully that he has guided all sane-minded men into the paths of peace and happiness, calmness and repose?

You are pleased to think him uneducated. The reason is that he refused to consider any education worth the name that did not help to school us in happiness. Was he to spend his time, as you encourage Triarius and me to do, in perusing poets, who give us nothing solid and useful, but merely childish amusement? Was he to occupy himself like Plato with music and geometry, arithmetic and astronomy, which starting from false premises cannot be true, and which moreover if they were true would contribute nothing to make our lives pleasanter and therefore better? Was he, I say, to study arts like these, and neglect the master art, so difficult and correspondingly so fruitful, the art of living?

No! Epicurus was not uneducated: the real philistines are those who ask us to go on studying till old age the subjects that we ought to be ashamed not to have learnt in boyhood.

Post by “Elayne” of October 18, 2019 at 8:13 PM

Right-- I don't think the career choice is the reason. This is down to specific people who have a stranglehold on teaching/study centers. The real reason I think it's important to see it as a specific human problem is that it can be changed. We can have Epicurus taught well in the ivory towers too. I don't believe they are invulnerable to change. The current regime can be toppled. I'd love to attract people who might take that on! And people everywhere else as well.

Post by “Joshua” of October 18, 2019 at 8:17 PM

Not sure if this really belongs here or not, but it's one of my favorite Walt Whitman poems;

Quote

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

Display More

(It very often comes to mind when I'm in discussion with a young-/flat-earth Christian in the family)

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