

Wilson (Catherine), Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity

Post by “Godfrey” of November 5, 2019 at 5:03 PM

https://www.academia.edu/26175858/Intro...ent_Materialism

This turned up in my email this morning; it may add some context to her latest book. This is the intro to a previous book of hers.

I've only had a chance to read a bit of it. A couple of notes:

- page 3: Gassendi stripped Epicurus of anti-providentialism, mortality of the soul, multiple worlds and a priori knowledge and in so doing laid the foundation for British empiricism. It sounds to me like he also laid the foundation for the destruction of the philosophy!

- page 5: "pain... is an unqualified evil". Followed by a decent description of Epicurean pleasure, except for her inclusion of the word "should". At first blush this seems to get to the heart of our disagreement with her: shoulds and unqualifieds imply Ideas, not a material universe.

Post by “Cassius” of November 5, 2019 at 5:39 PM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

It sounds to me like he also laid the foundation for the destruction of the philosophy!

A M E N !!!! 😊

There is no ambivalence about pain in Epicurean morals; it is an unqualified evil. Because death is the end for each sentient being, we should enjoy ourselves to the extent that our enjoyment of present pleasures does not diminish the quantity of pleasure we can enjoy in the future, and to the extent that our present enjoyments do not destroy health, bring down the wrath or contempt of others upon us, or subject us to the torments of guilt and regret, diminishing our future happiness. Moral wisdom consists not in

I agree with you. Wilson tends to be very loose with her wording, when she should be referring to Nature, she drops easily into expressing her own view as if everyone would agree with her.

I also think this illustrates why the older terminology of "choosing and avoiding" makes more sense than calling things "evil" or "good." Those words today in English are loaded with implications about virtue or religion that Epicurus would not associate with them. The situation is simply that pleasure is desirable in itself, and pain is undesirable in itself, and there is no need to load those words with connotations that are foreign to the Epicurean perspective

Post by “Godfrey” of November 5, 2019 at 6:59 PM

Yes, that's the one! And your wording is much better. 😊