

Scheduling And Beginning Thoughts for Epicurus Today Podcast

Post by “Cassius” of January 1, 2020 at 11:04 AM

It would probably make sense to launch this project with a major part of each episode devoted to a discussion first of The 40 Doctrines, the Vatican Sayings, and The 12 Principles of Physics, not necessarily in that order.

Post by “Charles” of January 5, 2020 at 2:55 PM

Would love to be a part of this, though perhaps we could cover 1-3 quotations per episode?

Post by “Cassius” of January 5, 2020 at 4:46 PM

Definitely will keep you posted Charles. As soon as I break through my mental block on getting a first episode of Lucretius done, I will move to this, and we can probably set up an entirely different schedule so that we can do both simultaneously.

Post by “Cassius” of January 23, 2020 at 6:23 AM

I write this after having edited the second episode of the Lucretius podcast. It strikes me that it is extremely helpful to be going through that from the beginning, rather than going straight to the [Principal Doctrines](#) or any other fragments, because it grounds us in the basics first.

For that reason I've revised the "prospectus" for what we would do in this project, both the online meeting and the open discussion, to say that rather than starting with the [Principal Doctrines](#) and Vatican Sayings that we go first through the Letter to Herodotus, Epicurus' most basic letter, and then after that move to the PDs and VSs.

Of course we can cite them as relevant during the discussion of the letter to Herodotus too, but by sticking with the letter we get Epicurus' most basic advice at the beginning.

Post by “Charles” of January 23, 2020 at 11:37 AM

Perhaps we should start with either the Letter to Menoceus, or a combination of the PD's and VS's, it would make more sense to build a following from the ground up that can keep up, rather than attempt to read Lucretius or the more advanced letters like Herodotus or Pythocles.

Post by “Cassius” of January 23, 2020 at 11:54 AM

I understand why you say that Charles, but I am actually saying the exact opposite. The Letter to Herodotus was the first of the three listed by Diogenes Laertius, and consistent with the presentation in Lucretius, it seems probable that the Epicureans started off confirming new students in the nature of the universe before they instructed them on how to live.

And that makes sense at a very fundamental level, because if indeed the universe had been created by gods, then Plato and the Stoics would be correct -- we should spend our time talking about how the gods want us to live, which means "virtue" in their Platonic/Socratic/Aristotelian sense of the word.

So while we probably should not go line by line and as slowly as we are going through the Lucretius poem, if we devote a couple of sessions to the letter to Herodotus first then that lets us cover the 12 Fundamental Principles, and gives us the foundation so that when we get to the PDs and the VS we have a background on what is meant by pleasure. The letter to Herodotus has the direct references from Epicurus as to how we consider the "feelings" as a standard, and that is essential to the ethics:

And besides we must keep all our investigations in accord with our sensations, and in particular with the immediate apprehensions whether of the mind or of any one of the instruments of judgment, and likewise in accord with the feelings existing in us, in order that we may have indications whereby we may judge both the problem of sense perception and the unseen.

(Do a word search for **feelings** within the letter to Herodotus and it occurs numerous times. This sets us up for seeing the role of feelings within the ethics, without which there is no basis for Epicurus asserting the role they should play.)

I think I am beginning to take the position in general that the letter to Menoeceus needs to be among the LAST things presented to a new student of Epicurus, and for better or worse the PDs and the VSs are in a similar category. Although they do contain a general statement about not fearing gods, they don't explain WHY -- if you start with them you are at the position of answering "Why don't we fear the gods" by saying "Because I say so!" and that's not a good answer. And that's because none of these establish within themselves the basic views on the nature of the universe, and on how to think -- they all look back at the points that were discussed first in summary form in the letter to Herodotus and in more detail in "On Nature" (that we have through Lucretius).