

Report on the 10th Panhellenic Symposium of Epicurean Philosophy, February 8-9, 2020, Cultural Center of Pallini, Athens, Greece (By Christos Yapijakis)

Post by "Cassius" of February 19, 2020 at 6:08 PM



A top-of-the-world cultural event, the 10th Panhellenic Symposium of Epicurean Philosophy took place on the weekend of 8 and 9 February 2020 with the participation of the record number of more than five hundred Greeks inspired by the enlightening and humanistic philosophy of Epicurus. This is a unique philosophical conference, as it is the only one organized worldwide dedicated exclusively to Epicurean philosophy. It is also the largest national philosophical conference and the only one in Greece that has been established since 2011 as an institution from the people rather than from the university philosophers. It is organized annually with free entrance for the public by the Municipality of Pallini and the Friends of Epicurean Philosophy "Garden of Athens" and "Garden of Salonica" at the Cultural Center of Gerakas, located within the ancient area of Gargettus, from which the philosopher Epicurus originated from.

The commencement of the Symposium was held by the Mayor of Pallini, Athanasios Zoutsos, followed by greetings from friends of Epicurus from all over the world and Greece.

In this year's 10th anniversary Panhellenic Symposium, Epicurus's timeless contribution to human thought was highlighted by distinguished scientists and philosophers in a roundtable discussion coordinated by Christos Yapijakis, Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Athens and founding member of the "Garden of Athens". Theodosia Pelegrinis, Professor of Philosophy and Former Rector of the University of Athens, referred to the humanistic philosophy of Epicurus; George Chrousos Professor of Medicine at the University of Athens, highlighted the Epicurean psychotherapeutic approach to stress management; Evangelos Protopapadakis, Assistant Professor of Philosophy of the University of Athens, discussed Epicurean ethics as based on human biology (bioethics); Anastasios Liolios, Professor of Physics at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and CERN researcher, presented Epicurean atomic physics as the ancestor of modern particle physics and quantum physics; Dionysis Simopoulos, Director Emeritus of Eugenides Planetarium, discussed the Epicurean perception regarding the

existence of many worlds in the Universe confirmed by modern astronomy; Stamatios Krimigis, Professor of Space Physics and renown NASA scientist, described modern exploration of the possible existence of life on other planets, as predicted by Epicurus.

Distinguished members of the “Gardens” made important speeches, among which it is worth mentioning “a new fragment of Diogenes of Oenoanda” by Yannis Avramidis of the “Garden of Thessaloniki” and “Epicurean philosophy and nutrition” by Klea Nomikou-Tsantsaridi of the “Garden of Athens”.

In the artistic part of the Symposium, the presentation of one scene from Christos Yapijakis' new theatrical play "A Happy Greek", regarding Epicurus' life and work, stood out. Directed by Stavros Spyraakis, the four amateur actors thrilled the audience with their performance and were rewarded by a particularly warm applause.

The 10th Panhellenic Symposium of Epicurean Philosophy has offered to hundreds of Greeks with a need for learning and a desire for a better world to experience the timeless utility of the Epicurean philosophy, which offers a mental shield to putative individual and social deadlocks. The scientific, humanistic and psychotherapeutic message of Epicurus on one hand expresses the simplest and most profound way of approaching a happy life with friendship and solidarity, even in difficult times, and on the other hand it differs fundamentally from the fashionable superficial message of "prosperity" propagated in Greece and internationally.

<http://www.epicuros.gr/pages/en.htm>

Post by “Cassius” of February 19, 2020 at 6:10 PM

Most all of those programs sound really interesting to me - I particular wish I could have heard the presentations on "many worlds" and exploration of life on other planets!

Post by “Cassius” of February 21, 2020 at 8:09 AM

Since I posted this thread, I'd like to add how impressed and appreciative I am of all the work and success of this project. There need to be more of these, and more often, and in more places and languages. The Athens group has done tremendous work for many years now to put on these regular seminars and organize regular activity to discuss Epicurus.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1449-report-on-the-10th-panhellenic-symposium-of-epicurean-philosophy-february-8-9-20/>

At the same time, I should note that I am think the emphasis of the final paragraph is misplaced. It always bothers me to see summaries about Epicurus that do not use the word "pleasure," and I think this summary misses the mark fairly widely about what the message of Epicurus really stands for. The first sentence here is A-OK. The second sentence, however, identifies Epicurean philosophy with "humanism," which as discussed in many places on this website I believe to be incorrect. Part of the problem is that "happy life" is a term that can mean so many different things to different people, and failing to place "happiness" in the context of "pleasure" is a sure way to increase rather than reduce confusion about the unique aspects of Epicurean philosophy. Further, and most unfortunately, the final sentence would lead someone to believe that the ultimate enemy of Epicurus is "prosperity."

Quote

The 10th Panhellenic Symposium of Epicurean Philosophy has offered to hundreds of Greeks with a need for learning and a desire for a better world to experience the timeless utility of the Epicurean philosophy, which offers a mental shield to putative individual and social deadlocks. The scientific, humanistic and psychotherapeutic message of Epicurus on one hand expresses the simplest and most profound way of approaching a happy life with friendship and solidarity, even in difficult times, and on the other hand it differs fundamentally from the fashionable superficial message of "prosperity" propagated in Greece and internationally.

Surely the ultimate enemy of Epicurus is not "prosperity," for multitudes of reasons, but I don't intend this post to turn into a major statement on the subject. For now I'll just quote the following:

[VS63](#): *Frugality too has a limit, and the man who disregards it is like him who errs through excess.*

Letter to Menoecus: *"And again independence of desire we think a great good — **not that we may at all times enjoy but a few things**, but that, if we do not possess many, we may enjoy the few in the genuine persuasion that those have the sweetest enjoy luxury pleasure in luxury who least need it, and that all that is natural is easy to be obtained, but that which is superfluous is hard."*

Ultimately I suspect that this final paragraph was written with the thought of appealing to an audience that might attend a seminar that has "practical" implications, rather than just academic discussion, and I can understand and appreciate that motivation. But it seems to me that the issues involved in truly understanding Epicurus require that we see the philosophy outside the box of modern political terminology, and keeping it attached to those conventional boxes does not seem to me to be the best way to achieve that goal. Discussing Epicurus in terms of political goals will be of interest to those who are primarily concerned with political

goals, but the deepest message of Epicurus far transcends temporary economic and political issues.

Post by “Elli” of February 21, 2020 at 1:36 PM

From LTM "**And again independence of desire we think a great good**".

The fact is that in this small sentence Epicurus **does not** mention anywhere that "independence of desire is a great good". This phrase, as a first principle, comes from Buddhism and not Epicurean Philosophy.

The translation in this phrase is erred since the word that Epicurus used is "**self-sufficiency**". Maybe, for this reason, some confuse that Epicurus speaks about "frugality" which is another word that is used for washing our brains on the basis of financial/political issues.

Self-sufficiency, as a philosophical diet, protects a thyself from fear and anxiety when there are some situations/circumstances/experiences that are not as "milk and honey". Epicurus does not trust the politicians. He does not trust the marketable education by academic professors and authors that hide another head of Lernean Hydra that is idealism. Epicurus does not trust the priesthood and the mob. Epicurus trusts only the freedom of the "self" that knows through his personal experiences to set the limits and with the usage of Epicurus's great methodology of the Canon, will answer with responsibility and prudently this question:

ES 71. Every desire must be confronted by this question: what will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished and what if it is not?

Post by “Cassius” of February 22, 2020 at 10:41 AM

I want to make another comment about the symposium model: I definitely like the "look" of it, and I would like to see something similar in the USA and other countries. The Athens group has done a remarkable job.

But I don't think that we in a group like Epicureanfriends.com should set the holding of seminars to be our primary focus. We ought to think carefully about what seminars accomplish. Are they the most effective method for spreading reliable and useful information about Epicurus to new people, and for forming a tight-knit "movement" of like-minded friends?

