

Stoic Challenges to Epicurean Philosophy - 4 - Wouldn't It Be Better to Live in A World of Stoics Or Platonists Rather than a World of Epicureans?

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2017 at 4:15 PM

[Cassius Amicus](#)

[March 7 at 7:05pm](#)

****Stoic Challenges To Epicurean Philosophy**** (4) Another thought-experiment that other schools used to question Epicurean ethics... Suppose you lived in a world populated by other Epicureans. Would that really be preferable to living in a world full of Platonists, Aristotelians, or Stoics? Would you, e.g., want other people to view your friendship as of value merely insofar as it contributes to their own "pleasure", in the Epicurean sense? (Some modern Epicureans dispute this claim about the instrumentality of friendship, whereas others strongly endorse it, as far as I can tell.)

I've heard some people say, e.g., that what appeals to them most is being Epicurean, but for everyone else to be Stoic, i.e., to be virtuous toward them for its own sake. Again, that would arguably form the basis of another reductio. Although, as noted above, some people might say they're happy to accept that apparent contradiction, I think many others find it more troubling, on reflection.

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Cassius Amicus If the essence of this question is "Would you want to live in a world full of Epicureans/Stoics/Platonists/Aristotelians?" then we're back to the same questions of identifying the goals of these philosophies and deciding whether those goals are valid. As an Epicurean and a proponent of modern science, I see no evidence of (1) gods/divine fire anywhere or (2) ideal forms in another world or (3) essences in this world. And so I reject as totally unfounded the ethics of Stoics, Platonists, and Aristotelians.

On the other hand, I find the strongest possible personal evidence of my ability to experience pleasure and pain, and find it very practical to consider justice and other conceptual abstractions to be desirable insofar as they advance the happiness of myself and my friends, and undesirable insofar as they lead to my/our pain. And likewise, because there are no enforcing gods or ideals or essences to control other people, and because I find that frequently those who are most religious are most vile, I would much prefer to live in a world where everyone recognized reality, and knew that if they attacked me then me and my friends would defend ourselves, just as those others would protect themselves if I or my friends were to choose to attack them. So my totally predictable answer is that I would prefer to live in an Epicurean world, and for anyone to whom I am well disposed I would also wish the same opportunity.

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Jimmy Daltrey type unknown

Jimmy Daltrey Do we not already live in a world that is closer to Epicureanism than the others? Enlightened self interest is pretty much the dominant ethos. No?

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Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus I would definitely say 'No' Jimmy. Even use of the word "enlightened" seems to acknowledge that the dominant morality of the world is that we should be "good" people. And thinking of the goal of life as "being a good person" is essentially a common-language way of saying "be a virtuous person" which is the approach of Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Zeno, and the non-Epicurean mainstream. And that doesn't even address the huge numbers (maybe the absolute majority) who just want to "do god's will." Of course these distinctions will be lost on people who think that "living virtuously" is essentially the same goal as "living happily" - as we see many argue even in these exchanges in this group.

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Jimmy Daltrey

Jimmy Daltrey Hmm, I'm in the UK and i can see little evidence of people valuing the virtuous. The US is more religious (I only know one practising Christian). Here it is material succes. Not that this is Epicurean, but closer to Epicureanism in terms of personal pleasure than the more po faced self denial of the Stoics.

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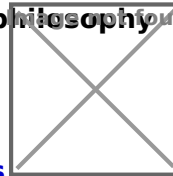
Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus I certainly grant you would know the UK better than I do if you life there. But if we look at it in terms of what people say is admirable, rather than what they actually do, do they not still praise "goodness" as the highest type of person?

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Hiram Crespo Image cannot be displayed or type unknown

Hiram Crespo The argument re: instrumentality actually started with the Cyrenaics, with the mysanthropic Hegesias arguing that people are instrumental, and later Anniceris arguing that they are not. It is my view that Anniceris' philosophy is are the main chain that links the Cyrenaics to the Epicureans by the way he reacted against Hegesias and argued in favor of a philosophy of friendship.



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[Cyrenaic Reasonings II: Hegesias and Anniceris](#)

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Hiram Crespo

Hiram Crespo Also, I want to address what seems like an underlying insinuation of many enemies of Epicurus: the belief that an Epicurean, because he seeks pleasure, can not be a good citizen or a model citizen. This essay by John Thrasher argues that Epicurean contractarianism, in seeking mutual advantage, can serve as a conciliatory process between citizens and that it has historically not gotten the credit it deserves. <https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3...PMPjhCc6Fa8YjAM>

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Hiram Crespo

[Hiram Crespo](#) Now on to answer the question: would it be preferable to live in a world full of Epicureans? I would not want to rid the world of people who think differently: this is what makes philosophy interesting, but I think a world full of Epicureans (as per PD 39) would be a world where people associate with kindred spirits primarily, attempt to have good relations with everyone, and avoid conflict with anyone else.

I think it would also be a world where conflict resolution would take the form of covenants of non-harm and of mutual advantage. I also think there would be scientific advancement, low levels of superstition to none, and a lot of comedy and merry.

I certainly think this would be a better world than one full of Platonists because in Plato's Republic, the state would steal our children to raise them, and engage in eugenics, there would be no personal freedom, and it would be an insufferable tyranny.

As for a world full of Stoics or Aristotelians, I do not know how to imagine such worlds. Maybe if others give me a clearer idea of what they would look like, that would help comparison.

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Cassius Amicus

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