

Musings on A Quick Statement of "What It Means to Be An Epicurean"

Post by "Cassius" of July 13, 2020 at 10:57 PM

My mind is distracted tonight and going in too many directions,, and in times like this it seems I always turns back to the fundamental issue of "what it means to be an Epicurean."

I do not expect to make any changes at the moment, but I am toying with the idea of deleting the quote from Lucian of Samosata (about "striking a blow for Epicurus") currently at the top of the home page. New people probably don't recognize that quote, and i am thinking it might be beneficial if we replaced it with something very pithy about what a new person can expect when they start posting in the forum.

I am thinking of something like this:

"There is no authoritative definition of "what it means to be an Epicurean," but *for purposes of this forum* you can expect to be welcomed as a valued participant if you hold that: (1) the universe was not created and is not controlled supernaturally [PD1], (2) there is no life after death [PD2], (3) the feelings of pleasure and pain are the ultimate guides to life [PD 3-4], (4) the virtues, including justice, are not absolute but contextual, and are valuable because they are instrumental in the attainment of pleasure and the avoidance of pain [PD 5-10, 30-40], (4) practical reason cannot be based on abstractions alone, but must based on sensation, feeling, and anticipation [PD 11-30], and [5] you feel a personal affinity for the philosophical tradition established by Epicurus of Samos."

I am probably going to forget about this and not make any changes for the time being, but I thought it would be interesting to see what you guys think about what key points needs to be in, and what need to be out of, such a statement. Keep in mind that the purpose would be something short enough to put at the top of the front page, which means you'll have to scroll through it every time you go there. On the other hand, even though short, it needs to hit the very highest points so as to be challenging and specific enough to be worthwhile. And most of all, the context is "*for purposes of this forum.*"

Of course i could also add a link to this detailed discussion so people can see all the issues that went into preparing the final version of it.

Any thoughts? I take no pride in authorship and my normal course anyway is to edit so many times that the original version is often unrecognizable when finished, so any and all thoughts are welcome.

Post by “Godfrey” of July 14, 2020 at 1:38 AM

Maybe "prudent living in an atomic universe" or "understanding pleasure in an atomic universe" or something along those lines....

Post by “Don” of July 14, 2020 at 5:58 AM

I think [Godfrey](#) is on to something but "atomic universe" sounds a little scary and radioactive 😊 Maybe in a material universe or a universe composed of only atoms and space.

Post by “Cassius” of July 14, 2020 at 6:25 AM

Yes the general direction of some reference to materialism probably makes sense...

Post by “Samj” of July 14, 2020 at 6:47 PM

Possibly.... "If you wish to make Pythocles rich, do not increase his means, but diminish his desire".

Post by “Joshua” of July 15, 2020 at 2:21 PM

It might be worth considering here the very words that were reportedly chosen to hang over the entrance to the Garden itself. Not to select them, necessarily; not if they don't suit your and our purpose. But to examine their implications, and imagine the string of choices that led to their selection. As recorded by Seneca the Younger:

Quote

HOSPES HIC BENE MANEBIS, HIC SUMMUM BONUM VOLUPTAS EST

Or in English;

Quote

Stranger, here you will do well to tarry; here our highest good is pleasure.

Post by “Joshua” of July 15, 2020 at 2:29 PM

We had a thread awhile back that comes to mind. You asked us:

[How Would You Answer Someone New Who Asked You: "What Is Epicurean Philosophy All About?"](#)

My answer from that thread was this—

Happiness;

In just one natural life--

In one uncreated, everlasting

And endless cosmos--

Through pleasure, friendship,

And fearless inquiry

Into the nature of things.

Post by “kenrob2037” of July 16, 2020 at 3:00 AM

For me, to be an Epicurean mean sharing. Sharing knowledge is the most important thing anyone can do in my opinion. I think about all the amazing people that have died and left their knowledge sheltering inside their graves, that's not on in my opinion.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1624-musings-on-a-quick-statement-of-what-it-means-to-be-an-epicurean/>

When Hemingway killed himself, he could have been passing his knowledge on instead. The same goes for Keith Emerson of ELP. He of all people had so much passion and understanding of music and he killed himself and let all his knowledge die with him.

No matter what happens in a person's life, there is always something you know that others don't and want to know. Don't die without passing on your knowledge.

Post by “Eoghan Gardiner” of July 16, 2020 at 3:26 PM

For me what it means to be an Epicurean is to live under the idea that our senses are actually useful. To live in a way that allows the fullness of all our faculties. That puts reason in its rightful place and to be grounded in the world and not in abstractions.

To be an Epicurean is to live pleurably, unashamedly and to be free from the guilt of Catholicism. To view our bodies as who and what we are, Not something which we merely use as a “vessel” for our true selves or a corrupt wretched thing.

To be free from foolish ideas that bring only pain, to free reason from the bonds of superstition and to be at ease with what we are and our position in this universe.

Post by “Cassius” of July 16, 2020 at 4:34 PM

Great post Eoghan. I particularly liked

[Quote from Eoghan Gardiner](#)

and to be free from the guilt of Catholicism.

It probably depends a lot on personal circumstances, and maybe this isn't as a much of a problem today as it used to be in the past, but freeing us from the guilt/domination of religion is clearly one of the most important aspects.