

Autarkia And Epicurean Living In The Modern World

Post by “Macario” of September 7, 2021 at 11:02 PM

[Quote from Philia](#)

And I also can see that it could be wonderful to re-create a modern Garden (or Gardens)...even a movement which would bring friendship and savoring life as the most important things, and work to overcome alienation, isolation, and consumerist over-consumption. And it would also be a place to examine and discuss the question of what makes a worthwhile enjoyable life.

I often find myself thinking about that, and it makes me wonder if anyone here has ever heard or know of the existence of such places nowadays anywhere in the world? I believe it would work on some Ecovillage self-sustainable model. It would be indeed an amazing place to visit, volunteer or even live for a while. Where we could study and exercise the philosophy in a theoretical and practical way.

By the way, welcome Philia! I am also new to the forum and found it a tremendously useful resource.

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 9, 2021 at 9:32 AM

[Quote from Macario](#)

it would work on some Ecovillage self-sustainable model

Hi Macario, Yes! And if we can't find it, we can create it!

And is anyone else interested in this too? I would love to know, as networking could be the key to creating this.

In Epicurus' teachings I remember reading something about self-sufficiency (I don't remember exactly what it was), but as I lay awake in the middle of the night, due to feelings of anxiety for the uncertainty of the future, it came to me that the only antidote to the anxiety is to actively work to become more self-sufficient -- to learn survival skills and to also live in a community that could survive the future fracturing of civilization due to climate change. (I live in Oregon

which is having yet another summer of intense forest fires, hazardous air quality from wildfire smoke, and extreme drought).

So what would be the ideal location for an Epicurean Eco-community? ...possibly Alaska? Or...?

Can we agree on a set of Epicurean postulates?

And a way to run the eco-community social structure?

Post by “Cassius” of September 9, 2021 at 10:11 AM

My two cents comments:

[Quote from Philia](#)

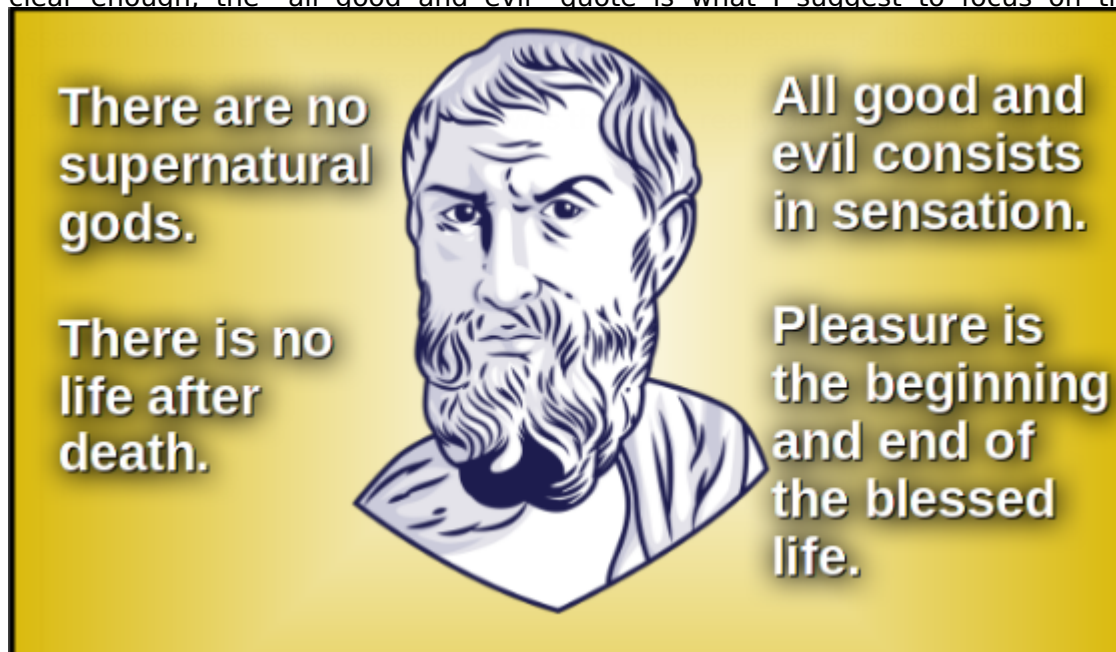
And is anyone else interested in this too? I would love to know, as networking could be the key to creating this.

Networking is what we are all about so start a thread somewhere as you please: Perhaps here: [Daily Life As An Epicurean](#) We could expand into a separate section later.

[Quote from Philia](#)

Can we agree on a set of Epicurean postulates?

That is always hard and I wouldn't recommend you start with a full set or you'll never get started. It was very difficult to come up with the "Not-NeoEpicurean" list, even though such a list is needed for an elaborate project (like this forum). As an even more basic "litmus test" the set of four premises in the gold box is what I currently recommend as a distinguishing starting point for consensus in any level of complexity of project. Even there, while the first two are clear enough, the "all good and evil" quote is what I suggest to focus on the "negative"



the focus on
was at least

Post by “Don” of September 9, 2021 at 10:43 AM

[Quote from Philia](#)

In Epicurus' teachings I remember reading something about self-sufficiency

I would be careful about ascribing the meaning of "economic" self-sufficiency to that word. From what I can find, autarkeia (the word in ancient Greek) had a self-sufficiency connotation of satisfied with yourself, content with yourself, etc. I see this as similar to the ideas of the [Epicurean gods](#) who are not affected by anger or gratitude, they are sufficient unto themselves.

I'd also bring up that the Garden wasn't a commune. Epicurus specifically did not want the members of the Garden's assets to be held in common. People could come and go. I've often imagined the Garden as a retreat in the city of Athens or other cities that had Epicurean communities, not separate from the city but a place to rest, relax, and then re-engage.

Post by “Cassius” of September 9, 2021 at 10:53 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Epicurus specifically did not want the members of the Garden's assets to be held in common

That's very clear from the texts and a very important point since a lot of people incorporate "communism" with the lifestyle they think Epicurus was associated with. Epicurus would have had before him the example from Plato of the community of women and children and the like, and I would expect he reacted against Platonic statist/communist ideals as he did to other Platonic ideals.

It seems like Epicurus was sufficiently well-off financially to afford multiple slaves and multiple pieces of real estate, so it sounds like they were getting contributions / making money from teaching and writing in addition to whatever they brought to the table from their own financial backgrounds, so that's definitely a consideration for modern-day efforts. Resources have to come from somewhere and that's very tricky to figure out.

Post by “Don” of September 9, 2021 at 11:18 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

It seems like Epicurus was sufficiently well-off financially

Good point. It appears there is some economic self-sufficiency implied by autarkeia, but more to be satisfied with what you have as far as I can tell. Sort of like VS35

Post by “Cassius” of September 9, 2021 at 12:00 PM

Not only is there "lack of resources" to get something started, but we also should be realistic and aware that every powerful institution that has evolved over the last 2000 years (primarily church and academia and governmental elite) are all aligned against the emergence of forms of organization that would challenge their authority. Not that we would want to necessarily bother them, of course, but that they assume to themselves the right to dictate the lifestyle choices of everyone, not just themselves.

I am not making these comments to be negative as I think they can and eventually will be overcome. But to be successful it's importance to fairly assess the obstacles in our way so that we can then target a plan to overcome them.

Which always bring to my mind this from the opening of Lucretius' Book Six:

*He therefore cleansed men's breasts with truth-telling precepts and fixed a limit to lust and fear and explained what was the chief good which we all strive to reach, and pointed out the road along which by a short cross-track we might arrive at it in a straightforward course; he showed too what evils existed in mortal affairs throughout, rising up and manifoldly flying about by a natural -call it chance or force, because nature had so brought it about - and **from what gates you must sally out duly to encounter each;***

Post by “Kalosyni” of September 11, 2021 at 11:04 AM

Thank you Cassius and Don for your feedback.

I find this forum to be beneficial for learning due to your commitment (as well as the few other regular contributors) to strive to uncover the original ideas of Epicurus.

As for a practical application...

In my own life, I want to create pleasurable friendships with like minded people. And so I ask myself how will I do that in these current times? Where I live (Oregon) is currently having a continued covid surge, which makes it difficult to create new social connections. My few friends are all busy people --- people live insular lives with their life partner, raising children, working long hours. I do none of those things, and so simply want to create a way to interact with people, and preferably in a fun way. 😊

“Friendship goes dancing round the world, announcing to all of us to wake up to happiness” (*Vatican Saying* = VS 52)

Post by “Cassius” of September 11, 2021 at 11:21 AM

[Quote from Philia](#)

In my own life, I want to create pleasurable friendships with like minded people. And so I ask myself how will I do that in these current times? Where I live (Oregon) is currently having a continued covid surge, which makes it difficult to create new social connections. My few friends are all busy people --- people live insular lives with their life partner, raising children, working long hours. I do none of those things, and so simply want to create a way to interact with people, and preferably in a fun way.

That's the reason why I think that whatever can happen will start online. Even if you're focusing on real-life meetings, you need a way to coordinate those meetings. Telegram or text messaging or Facebook are all "part" of the answer - to get the word out - but for long-lasting collaborative effort I don't think there's a substitute for a "permanent" on-line presence like this one. You certainly don't need to point people to a subforum here at Epicureanfriends (though we can easily set that up as requested) but you do need your own permanent "home" -- OregonEpicureans.com or whatever -- so that people can actually "collaborate" and get things done.

Post by “Cassius” of September 11, 2021 at 4:03 PM

Actually let me revise and extend those remarks. The first spark for the individuals involved won't necessarily "start" online - it will be the recognition among friends - as part of real life - that the world is screwed up beyond recognition. These like-minded friends will see that certain key issues such as bowing down to fictional gods and keeping people alive in nursing homes until they are little more than vegetables makes no sense, never has made sense, and must one day come to an end.

And when those friends who share those basic values start looking for means of decoding what when wrong, and organizing to find a fix, they will look for precedent in their history (which for most of us is "Western Civilization") which also helps them explain how we got so screwed up.

If they look long enough they will find Epicurus as the clear and articulate leader of a movement that could have prevented all this but for it being snuffed out far too early by the "bad guys."

But they will find that the study of his work will give them a jump-start toward doing what they need to do themselves today - which they will need to work to understand in depth, and share that information, in a way that only the internet allows.

Post by "Macario" of September 16, 2021 at 6:06 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I would be careful about ascribing the meaning of "economic" self-sufficiency to that word. From what I can find, autarkeia (the word in ancient Greek) had a self-sufficiency connotation of satisfied with yourself, content with yourself, etc.

[Quote from Don](#)

It appears there is some economic self-sufficiency implied by autarkeia, but more to be satisfied with what you have as far as I can tell.

It seems to me that the term 'self-sufficiency' in Epicurean Philosophy, is strongly related to an economic meaning. What I could understand from DeWitt's utilization of the word is that corresponds, not to be satisfied with what you have, but to the ability of fulfilling one's "natural and necessary desires" (food, water and shelter) with one's own resources. If this is the case, then I believe the self-sufficiency concept pursued in an eco-village/agro-forestry model would be in accordance with the Epicurean one, since the goal is to use the land (own resource) to

provide food, water and shelter without depending on public/private services.

I'd like to quote fragments of DeWitt's book that led me to that interpretation of self-sufficiency:

Quote

[Chapter X: The New Freedom / Section: Necessity and Fortune]

"According to Epicurus, the wise man will keep himself prepared through addiction to the simple life and the cultivation of self-sufficiency. During a siege of Athens he kept his associates alive by doling out the beans. One of his apothegms applies to such an emergency: "The wise man, when confronted by lack of the necessities, stands by to share with others rather than to have them share with him; so great a reserve of self-sufficiency he discovers."

(...)

So consistently does Epicurus urge throughout his teaching the maintenance of freedom and the control of experience, which is freedom at its best, that he even brings it into relationship with diet and the general design of living. (...) To Epicurus the simple life meant contentment with little and this was called self-sufficiency, which in turn meant freedom: "Of self-sufficiency the most precious fruit is freedom." That the reference of these words was to food and not to friendship is made clear by the following: "The wise man, when confronted by lack of the necessities, stands by rather to share with others than to have them share with him; so great a reserve of self-sufficiency he discovers." (...) The proper attitude toward the desires, according to Authorized Doctrine 29, is to regard some as "natural and necessary," others as "natural but not necessary," and the rest as "neither natural nor necessary." The first class has reference to food, drink, clothing, and housing. (...) The correct procedure is defined in Vatican Saying 21: "Human nature is not to be coerced but persuaded, and we shall persuade her by satisfying the necessary desires, and the natural desires if they are not injurious, but relentlessly denying the harmful."

[Chapter XIV: The New Virtues / Section: Hope]

(...) "there was no necessity of living with Necessity"; by building up a reserve of self-sufficiency the wise man could forestall the compulsions of poverty, war, or servitude.

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It also seems to me that "self-sufficiency" is a requirement to reach the state of "ataraxia", since the possibility of not being able to fulfill your basic needs (like having shelter and something to eat) would put you in a state of disturbance.

Quote

"The wise man, when confronted by lack of the necessities, stands by to share with others rather than to have them share with him; so great a reserve of self-sufficiency he discovers."

This sentence is very important to me in particular, since it makes me realize that that are basically two ways of increasing the "reserve of self-sufficiency": accumulating more resources or limiting your necessities; both will do it, but the last one seems much easier to achieve.

At last, my overall knowledge of Epicurean philosophy is still very limited, so I appreciate you guys pointing out any signs of misinterpretation.

Post by "Macario" of September 16, 2021 at 7:05 PM

[Quote from Philia](#)

As for a practical application...

In my own life, I want to create pleasurable friendships with like minded people. And so I ask myself how will I do that in these current times? Where I live (Oregon) is currently having a continued covid surge, which makes it difficult to create new social connections. My few friends are all busy people --- people live insular lives with their life partner, raising children, working long hours. I do none of those things, and so simply want to create a way to interact with people, and preferably in a fun way. 😊

I must say I find myself in a very similar situation. I also believe being able to interact and have pleasurable conversations with like-minded people is not only beneficial, but it's also a way of merging ideas and possibly starting something aiming a common goal.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

That's the reason why I think that whatever can happen will start online. Even if you're focusing on real-life meetings, you need a way to coordinate those meetings. Telegram or text messaging or Facebook are all "part" of the answer - to get the word out - but for long-lasting collaborative effort I don't think there's a substitute for a "permanent" on-line presence like this one.

Indeed, I think the internet, especially in the times we're living in, is the best "place" to find like-minded people and to organize something that can lead to true collaboration.

A question: is there any way to private message someone in the forum?

Post by “Cassius” of September 16, 2021 at 7:17 PM

[Quote from Macario](#)

accumulating more resources or limiting your necessities; both will do it, but the last one seems much easier to achieve.

That may in fact be true, but I do think that there are enticements to "living small as a rule" that have to be guarded against. I know I am a lazy person myself, and laziness is probably not the best way to make these decisions. I would always keep in mind the key rule of [VS63](#) - Frugality too has a limit, and the man who disregards it is like him who errs through excess.

[Quote from Macario](#)

A question: is there any way to private message someone in the forum?

Yes absolutely, I am sorry that is not easier to see. Perhaps it is harder to see if you only use a mobile advice. On the desktop it's easy to see the "dialog bubble" icon near the top right -- when you click that you can message any other user or combination of users.

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2021 at 5:27 AM

One more point Macario: the messenger system in this software is called "conversations" so be sure to look for that word instead of "messages"

Post by “Macario” of September 17, 2021 at 12:15 PM

Thank you Cassius! I found it. It was my mistake, I was looking for a way to privately message someone, looking at the user's profile rather than a general button. But then, looking again, I realized it's also possible to start a private conversation at the user's profile page. Turns out I

made a very bad search after all. 😊

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2021 at 12:17 PM

No problem! Also if you're on a desktop, there is now a "Conversations" button at bottom right. You can click that and a list of users should pop up and you can either click on a user you see there, or hit the "plus" sign.

Post by “Don” of September 17, 2021 at 3:58 PM

If we end up with a good discussion on autarkeia here, [Cassius](#) may want to move this part of the "Welcome Philia" thread to another spot. Just a suggestion.

Sorry, [Macario](#), for the delay in responding to your posts above!

[Quote from Macario](#)

It seems to me that the term 'self-sufficiency' in Epicurean Philosophy, is strongly related to an economic meaning.

My soapbox here on the forum is always go back to the original texts, and don't trust any one translation of any word that was originally in Greek or Latin. I saw that [Saint-Andre has this note on Vatican Saying 44](#):

Quote

VS44: When the sage contends with necessity, he is skilled at giving rather than taking — such a treasury of self-reliance has he found.

ὁ σοφὸς εἰς τὰ ἀναγκαῖα συγκριθεῖς μᾶλλον ἐπίσταται μεταδιδόναι ἢ μεταλαμβάνειν· τηλικούτον αὐταρκείας εὔρεθσαυρόν.

[44] The word αὐτάρκεια is often translated as "self-sufficiency", but I think "self-reliance" is slightly better because the Epicurean sage needs friends and therefore is not entirely self-sufficient.

So, right away, we have self-reliance and self-sufficiency as two options. I agree they may mean similar things, but it doesn't get us closer to whether it's economic, a sense of satisfaction, contentment with circumstances, or a combination or something else.

Thank you for the quote from DeWitt. As [Cassius](#) will no doubt confirm, I have certain problems with DeWitt's interpretation and lack of citations sometimes. I took a look at the section you referenced, especially because I was curious about the beans! Sure enough, the footnote for that is from [Plutarch, Demetrius, Chapt. 24](#): "At this time also, we are told, the philosopher Epicurus sustained the lives of his associates with beans, which he counted out and distributed among them." In Greek, "associates" is [συνήθης](#) which seems more friendly than that word would imply, I'd like something like "ones with whom he was well-acquainted or intimate with one."

But, I realize, I digress. This doesn't get us closer to an understanding of what αὐτάρκεια conveyed to the ancient Greek mind. What I'm going to do is take a look at where that word shows up in Epicurus's extant work (to the best of my ability)

We've seen VS44 above.

VS45. The study of what is natural produces not braggarts nor windbags nor those who show off the culture that most people fight about, but those who are fearless and self-reliant and who value their own good qualities rather than the good things that have come to them from external circumstances. οὐ κομποῦς οὐδὲ φωνῆς ἐργαστικὸς οὐδὲ τὴν περιμάχητον παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς παιδεῖαν ἐνδεικνυμένους φυσιολογία παρασκευάζει, ἀλλὰ σοβαροὺς καὶ αὐτάρκεις καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀγαθοῖς, οὐκ ἐπὶ τοῖς τῶν πραγμάτων μέγα φρονοῦντες.

VS77: The greatest fruit of self-reliance is freedom. τῆς αὐταρκειᾶς καρπὸς μέγιστος [ἐλευθερία](#).

Fragment 202. He who follows nature and not groundless opinions is completely self-reliant. With regard to what is enough by nature, everything he owns is a source of wealth; whereas with regard to unlimited desires, even the greatest wealth is poverty. ὁ οὖν τῇ φύσει παρακολουθῶν καὶ μὴ ταῖς κεναῖς δόξαις ἐν πᾶσιν αὐτάρκης· πρὸς γὰρ τὸ τῇ φύσει ἀρκοῦν πᾶσα κτήσις ἐστι πλοῦτος, πρὸς δὲ τὰς ἀορίστους ὀρέξεις καὶ ὁ μέγιστος πλοῦτός ἐστι πενία.

Fragment 476: 476. Self-reliance is the greatest wealth of all. πλουσιώτατον αὐτάρκεια πάντων.

And, please let me add, I'm not copying these here to be pedantic! I just want all those in one spot to make it easier for us to refer to them. That's all for now that I can find on the fly.

Fragment 202 especially, to me, gets at contentment with what one has and not necessarily being economically self-reliant/self-sufficient.

The definition in LSJ for αὐταρκεία is [here](#) and the definition gives links to:

Plato. [Philebus, 67a](#).

Socrates

In this argument, then, both mind and pleasure were set aside; neither of them is the absolute good, since they are devoid of self-sufficiency, adequacy, and perfection?

Aristotle, [Nicomachean Ethics, 1097b](#).

The same conclusion also appears to follow from a consideration of the self-sufficiency of happiness—for it is felt that the final good must be a thing sufficient in itself. The term self-sufficient, however, we employ with reference not to oneself alone, living a life of isolation, but also to one's parents and children and wife, and one's friends and fellow citizens in general, since man is by nature a social being....

Happiness, therefore, being found to be something final and self-sufficient, is the End at which all actions aim.

Aristotle, [Rhetoric. 1.6](#).

To enumerate them one by one, the following things must necessarily be good. Happiness, since it is desirable in itself and self-sufficient, and to obtain it we choose a number of things.

Aristotle, [Politics, 1.1256b](#).

This then virtually completes the list of the various modes of life, those at least that have their industry sprung from themselves and do not procure their food by barter and trade—the lives of the herdsman, the brigand, the fisherman, the hunter, the husband-man. Others also live pleasantly by combining some of these pursuits, supplementing the more deficient life where it happens to fall short in regard to being self-sufficing: for instance, some combine a pastoral life and brigandage, others husbandry and hunting, and similarly with the others—they pass their time in such a combination of pursuits as their need compels. Property of this sort then seems to be bestowed by nature herself upon all, as immediately upon their first coming into existence, so also when they have reached maturity.

The final selection from Aristotle definitely has an economic aspect; however, the excerpt from Plato has an aspect of contentment about it. So, it seems to have been a multi-purpose word. But I'll post this, and feel free to continue the discussion! I find this very pleasurable to engage in.

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2021 at 4:09 PM

Did you come to a conclusion there Don?

Post by “Don” of September 17, 2021 at 4:09 PM

Quote from Cassius

Did you come to a conclusion there Don?

Nope. Not yet. 😊

Post by “Cassius” of September 17, 2021 at 4:10 PM

LOL. I was afraid I missed it so good!

Post by “Don” of September 17, 2021 at 8:15 PM

I also apologize, [Macario](#) , but I should have directly responded to the DeWitt quoted passages. I'll try to do that over the weekend. I did see that this line:

Quote from DeWitt

To Epicurus the simple life meant contentment with little and this was called self-sufficiency, which in turn meant freedom: “Of self-sufficiency the most precious fruit is freedom.”

seems to convey to me the idea of contentment in relation to αὐτάρκεια.

Thank you again for engaging in this conversation. I know it's been valuable for me so far to get me to delve into this topic.

Post by “Macario” of September 21, 2021 at 6:26 PM

Hello [Don](#)! Thanks for replying! To me, this discussion is not only pleasurable but also really valuable. As I said before, it seems to me that what Epicurus takes as autarkeia is a key requirement to achieve the state of ataraxia. Therefore, I believe it's crucial to understand the applied concept in order to understand better the Epicurean Ethics.

[Quote from Don](#)

My soapbox here on the forum is always go back to the original texts, and don't trust any one translation of any word that was originally in Greek or Latin.

I agree that this a much better approach when it comes to understand some concepts used in ancient texts. Thanks for organizing and listing the original fragments along with the original texts. Also, the links you provided are valuable research resources and I was not aware of them.

[Quote from Don](#)

The final selection from Aristotle definitely has an economic aspect; however, the excerpt from Plato has an aspect of contentment about it. So, it seems to have been a multi-purpose word.

I must agree that is hard, from the fragments of Aristotle and Plato to conclude a precise definition for the word. Regarding Epicurean fragments, from VS45 and Fragment 476 I find it also hard to extract a precise definition.

Now, regarding fragment 202, I must say it still seems to me that has an economic aspect. I am assuming the word 'wealth' (πλοῦτός) is used here meaning the amount of resources one has minus his necessities/desires, therefore, wealth would be the result of this equation.

This seems to be in accordance with the sentences used: "with regard to what is enough by nature, everything he owns is a source of wealth" and "whereas with regard to unlimited desires, even the greatest wealth is poverty." On the first one, if one's desires are limited by what is enough by nature (that being his natural and necessary desires), nature itself can provide what he needs, so everything he owns will increase the result of the equation, thus, being a source of wealth. On the second one, if one's desires/necessities are unlimited, the second term of the equation is infinite, then, no matter how great the first term is, the result (wealth) will always be negative.

On the other hand, in the beginning sentence of the fragment: "He who follows nature and not groundless opinions is completely self-reliant", the use of the word 'opinions' (δόξαις) rather

than 'desires' (ἐπιθυμίας) confuses me and points again to the direction of contentment rather than economic self-sufficiency.

In addition, allow me to add to the list, some fragments that also refers to autarkeia and I think it is important to take them in account:

First, [fragment 135a](#):

Quote

We value self-reliance not so that we will live simply and cheaply in all things, but so that we will not be consumed by them.

ἐζηλώσαμεν τὴν αὐτάρκειαν οὐχ ὅπως τοῖς εὐτελέσι καὶ λιτοῖς παντῶς χρώμεθα, ἀλλ' ὅπως θαρρῶμεν πρὸς αὐτά.

Then, on the [note of VS77](#), Saint-Andre says "Self-reliance is discussed in greater depth at [Letter to Menoikos, Section 130](#)." From that section we get:

Quote

We hold that self-reliance is a great good — not so that we will always have only a few things but so that if we do not have much we will rejoice in the few things we have, firmly persuaded that those who need luxury the least enjoy it the most, and that everything natural is easily obtained whereas everything groundless is hard to get.

καὶ τὴν αὐτάρκειαν δὲ ἀγαθὸν μέγα νομίζομεν, οὐχ ἵνα πάντως τοῖς ὀλίγοις χρώμεθα, ἀλλ' ὅπως, ἐὰν μὴ ἔχωμεν τὰ πολλὰ, τοῖς ὀλίγοις ἀρκώμεθα, πεπεισμένοι γνησίως ὅτι ἥδιστα πολυτελείας ἀπολαύουσιν οἱ ἥκιστα ταύτης δεόμενοι, καὶ ὅτι τὸ μὲν φυσικὸν πᾶν εὐπόριστόν ἐστι, τὸ δὲ κενὸν δυσπόριστον

This last quote seems very important to me. I underlined the words 'natural' (φυσικὸν) and 'groundless' (κενὸν) because are the words that Epicurus uses to refer to "natural and necessary desires" and "not natural and unnecessary desires" respectively. While this, in my opinion, emphasizes the relation with economic self-sufficiency, the sentence "if we do not have much we will rejoice in the few things we have", seems to have a strong contentment connotation.

In the end, it seems to me that the aspects of contentment with what one have and the idea of economic self-sufficiency are both connected to the concept of autarkeia in Epicurus. Maybe not unrelated to one another, but the first one (contentment) making it easier - or may even be a requirement? - to reach the second one (economic self-sufficiency) and then, complete the concept of autarkeia. Although this conclusion is still not very clear to me.

Post by “Don” of September 21, 2021 at 7:39 PM

[Macario](#) , thank you very much for those additional excerpts! That's very helpful.

[Quote from Macario](#)

In the end, it seems to me that the aspects of contentment with what one have and the idea of economic self-sufficiency are both connected to the concept of autarkeia in Epicurus

I am coming to the same conclusion.

I'm not sure I completely concur with your "equation" interpretations, but I believe I can see where you're coming from in those.

I do think that Epicurus taught that we it was necessary to have our basic existential needs taken care of - somewhat like [the base of the pyramid of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs](#) - before we can live a pleasurable life, but I don't think he thought that was sufficient especially since he places such an emphasis on friendship.

I'll continue to cogitate on this and share any thoughts on this thread.

Thank you again for engaging!

Post by “Don” of September 21, 2021 at 10:10 PM

I *may* go so far as to say autarkeia has, in part, the connotation of being content with one's economic situation if at least all your basic needs are met. Which is not to say one has to be satisfied with a mere subsistence existence!! There's nothing a priori "bad" about accumulating wealth (like the property manager talked about by Philodemus) but don't get caught up in making money for money's sake. The goal of wealth is still the living of a pleasurable life and being able to give to your friends if needed.

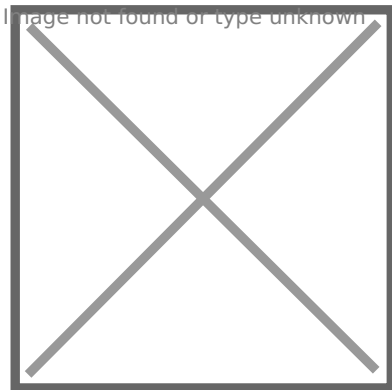
I *don't* think Epicurus advocated the complete removal from society and the establishment of autonomous communes away from the polis. The Garden was a community but not a commune. I don't endorse that connotation of autarkeia. Even "live unknown" had connections to society. How else would the wise establish a school but not draw a mob. How else would they give speeches if asked if they were off in the woods or cut off from society?

I'm also not convinced that the Garden was residential. I think some close affiliates like the "guides/teachers" lived with Epicurus or near the Garden, but I get the impression it was more a "commuter school" for the most part. But I'm still doing research on that.

NOTE: I'm not saying you're necessarily advocating the viewpoint I'm talking about in the last 2 paragraphs, [Macario](#) , but I think there's a strong strain of this out there. So, I figured I'd get my position on the record... or at least my position as of the writing of this post. As [Cassius](#) says, I reserve the right to revise and extend my remarks 😊

Post by “Don” of September 22, 2021 at 6:42 AM

I just found this article on Academia talking about the development of autarkeia in Greek antiquity:



[Ancient debates on autarkeia and our global impasse](#)

Probably the most glaring geo-political contradiction today consists between economic inequality on the one hand and the over-exploitation of the planet's...

www.academia.edu

ANCIENT DEBATES ON AUTARKEIA AND OUR GLOBAL IMPASSE

Unfortunately, it doesn't mention Epicurus, but it does lay out the development of the concept through Aristotle, Cynicism, Pericles, etc. It does appear to include both contentment and economics from an early stage of the formation of the idea. In any case, this seems to give a good summary of the ancient Greek mindset on this term.