

General Comments On Use of AFDIA As A Book Review / Organizational Theme For Meetings

Post by "Cassius" of April 16, 2022 at 12:54 PM

I meant to set up this thread earlier to highlight the potential use of AFDIA as an organizational theme for a local Book Review Club or even "Meetup Group." That's one reason that we are posting the audio highlights of our 2022 Spring Zoom Book Review on Youtube, so that people in the future can compare notes and use this as an example for their own "local" program (either locally live or via internet).

Here is a playlist of the sessions that have been recorded so far:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDceb_E1-6U&list=PLVz4YKWf8cnt-oy-134yO61qKI0EVII8k

When we get to the end of the series - only a few weeks away as I write this - please help me to remember to include as a "summary" session a discussion of the topics that are included here: [General Discussion of "A Few Days In Athens"](#)

IN PARTICULAR it would be good to cover this article of criticism, which I think contains many good points:

Thread

[Problems in Frances Wright's "A Few Days in Athens"](#)

I have dragged my feet on reading Frances Wright's fictionalized account of a student in Epicurus' Garden, partly because the language is so flowery that the passages I've seen quoted put me off. I've finally tackled it, and I have some thoughts to share. My main conclusion is that there are too many serious flaws to recommend it as a representation of Epicurean Philosophy without any accompanying commentary.

Misleading Implications about Pleasure as Restraint

Frances Wright has Epicurus say...

Elayne

October 22, 2020 at 3:08 PM

Post by "Cassius" of April 16, 2022 at 6:25 PM

[Joshua](#) - This is to help me remember to ask you about the source of that information that William Short saved someone (or was saved) from a flooding stream.

That is the first real evidence (speculative though it is to construe it that way) of "cross-pollination" of ideas among Frances Wright and her European friends. I suppose that the idea of dedicating the book to Jeremy Bentham might be another.

The reason this topic comes to mind again is that I read to the end of the book again today to assist in preparing the final chapters, and I was struck that the final chapter was a lot deeper than I remembered. I had our it down in my mind as mainly a broadside against religion, but upon rereading it is almost a "Torquatus-like" summary of many points of the philosophy.

One of the subjects I would like us to cover upon completing the book is this general question I have always had: what do we make of Wright, who has such a commanding understanding of Epicurean philosophy, seemingly devoting so little of the rest of her life to spreading it further?

Is her apparent example something we will all end up following ourselves? Having identified so clearly the details of a philosophy that was so relatively unknown, why not pursue it further?

Was the obstacle of religion so strong in her day that more reconstruction could not be practically attempted? Was she temperamentally more of an activist herself, and was she herself not convinced of the practicality of the approach? I am sure there are other possibilities I am not naming and I am very interested in hearing what others may think.

All of this can and should wait til we get to the end, but I hope those who are interested in the topic will be thinking about it.

Heres a good bio page which does not even mention AFDIA:

[Wright, Frances - Freethought Trail - New York](#)

We need to do some "textual criticism" and historical snooping of our own. Where was Wright and what was she doing during the years when AFDIA must have been written?

My standard disclaimer:. I have no intention or thought of taking any credit away from Wright. My exclusive interest is in unearthing more insightful writing on Epicurus. If others were in any way collaborating in any of the preparation of AFDIA, then we may have the ability to find more perceptive writing by others on Epicurus, and the more the better!

Post by “Joshua” of April 16, 2022 at 8:05 PM

Hmmm...

Here was my original thread on the subject:

Thread

[The Long Neglect of William Short](#)

Here's an interesting thought; what do we actually know about this guy?

Judging from Mr. Jefferson's letter in reply, we may infer that William Short, like Jefferson, positively identified himself as an Epicurean. Cassius' recent reading of Frances Wright's other work has me thinking that there might be gems hidden here as well.

He was a talented, capable, brilliant protégé of Thomas Jefferson, and a deft hand at diplomacy. He forsook the dream of a high and polished political career in his...



Joshua

October 5, 2020 at 6:48 PM

Here's a secondary source:

<https://www.vqronline.org/%E2%80%98-very-human-portrait%E2%80%99>

And a passage from that source:

Quote

In 1790, on a cold and windy day some time before the French Revolution had turned on liberal nobles such as the due, William and his love were out canoeing on a pond by the Seine when Short dove overboard and nearly lost consciousness in saving a boy from drowning in rapids. The hero had then returned to the due's chateau, dined, "quaffed old Malvoisie & other wines to a degree that astonished everybody," and played chess "with great success," before drifting into a sweet sleep.