

Living The Hobo Life?

Post by “brett” of January 8, 2018 at 11:02 PM

hi all,

I ran across this article a while ago. While much of it seemed fairly accurate(to my novice eyes at least), I was immediately struck by how 'wrong' it seemed to say that Epicureanism leads to the hobo life.

<https://philosophynow.org/issues/98/Epic...m The Hobo Test>

If I'm learning anything, it's that pleasure is the highest good and necessary and natural desires (housing being one) are important to ensuring the future happy state.

Mr. Dougall seems to have created caricature of Epicureanism that comes off a bit insulting for it's naivete.

Thoughts?

Brett

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2018 at 11:11 PM

Thanks for posting that. We have seen and mentioned that on the Facebook page in the past, but of course I doubt I can find that to reference it. I will have to refresh my memory:

FOUND IT! Here it is, and the reaction was what you would expect:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Epicure...54065381309088/>

Jason BakerGroup Admin Wolfgang Pauli would likely have had a pithy comment to make about this article. "Das ist nicht nur nicht richtig, es ist nicht einmal falsch!"The album was released on February and was released in " this is not just wrong, it's not even wrong!"Automatically Translated

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[Cassius Amicus](#) type unknown

[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) "Both Epicurus and his philosophical rivals the Stoics would quickly assert their definitions for 'good'. The Stoics would say that 'good' simply means 'benefit'." Oh good grief, is the entire article like this? BENEFIT??? what happened to virtue?

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[Jason Baker](#) type unknown

[Jason BakerGroup Admin](#) It gets better*.

*read: worse.

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[Cassius Amicus](#)

[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) [Jason Baker](#) Yes you are right it does get worse!!!!

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[Michael Carteron](#) type unknown

[Michael Carteron](#) Yeah, that threw me too. "Benefit" sounds more in line with Epicureanism, although even then way off. I seriously have to doubt the author's knowledge of these philosophies.

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[Cassius Amicus](#)

[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) [Michael Carteron](#) - Right - he does not sound like he has read them deeply - unfortunately his superficial understanding is probably the way the majority of people are taught.

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) I would expect better from a philosopher.

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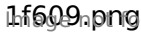

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus


[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) " To Epicurus, satisfaction is the highest pleasure, whereas unfulfilled desire is the highest pain." Here I think we have another candidate for Ekshesh Bekele's possible view (?) that the eradication of desire is the goal of Epicurus   type unknown

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) "After defining good and evil, Epicurus defined the good life. To Epicurus, the good life consists of experiencing as much pleasure, with as little pain as humanly possible. " Ironically this writer states a formulation better than we see in many other places, whether he realizes it or not.  😊 He's almost quoting the Ciceronian statement "nothing was preferable to a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures."

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) So he swerves off into politics and concludes: "In combination, these four large changes in nature make modern Epicureanism miserable and nearly impossible."

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) In the end this is a good article to support why I crusade on the issues I do. The version of Epicureanism presented here is essentially the same taught by the majority of websites and academics, and if their version was correct I wouldn't want anything to do with it either.

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) Yeah, it's very odd. He seems to assume that Epicureans don't work or something.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) Yep - I'm afraid he takes the stoic view of epicureans and carries it to its logical extreme - which in a way is to his credit, since he is being consistent with what he believes to be true.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

[Ron Warrick](#) or type unknown

[Ron Warrick](#) I'm hoping this is unserious satire.

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Michael Carteron

[Michael Carteron](#) I doubt it.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) I would like to think satire too, but the drift of the article is what is popularly taught about Epicurus across the internet, eg the DeBotton "school of life" perspective, and even some who post here.

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Cassius Amicus

Write a reply...

[Scott Heavner](#) or type unknown

[Scott Heavner](#) I think that the author of this article grossly exaggerated the tenants of Epicureanism. It would be like us saying that the perfect Stoic was a carbon copy of Mr. Spock (though I love Spock). Even a life lived in extreme Christian piety would fail this so called hobo test. Prudent living and fair assessment of life's necessities is a far cry from apathy. This author has a master's degree in philosophy? That kind of nauseates me.

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Cassius Amicus

[Cassius AmicusGroup Admin](#) Apologies to the exceptions, but my perception is that the author is pretty typical of what one becomes when one has a master's degree in philosophy!
1f609.png 🤔



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Scott Heavner

[Scott Heavner](#) Very true  

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Post by “brett” of January 8, 2018 at 11:15 PM

LOL! What's funny (not so funny really) is that if I were ignorant about its non sequiturs, I might have been turned off from Epicureanism. Much of the 'philosophy and...' series of books is vapid and pandering (and one of my very good friends from college is a regular writer in that series...sorry friend.)

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2018 at 11:16 PM

I am scanning this again and this time this passage caught my eye more: "To Epicurus, *satisfaction* is the highest pleasure, whereas unfulfilled *desire* is the highest pain." <<< I am forgetting some of the terminology tonight but this theory of pleasure is not at all the complete story, and that is well established in the texts on pleasure such as Gosling & Taylor "Greeks on Pleasure." One classic example of how all pleasure is not satisfaction of a deficit is the smelling of a flower. Were you in pain because you were not smelling the flower before you smelled it?

No, you did not miss the smell at all, and yet it was pleasurable to smell the flower. Many other examples can be given how all pleasure is not the satisfaction of a pain, and this way of analyzing pleasure (and attacking it) was dismissed even before Epicurus.

Post by “brett” of January 8, 2018 at 11:19 PM

In my elementary understanding, Epicurus specifically said that NOT satisfying some pleasures (and enduring some pains) is necessary for lasting pleasure. In other words, some pleasures shouldn't be satisfied since their satisfaction will bring pain.

Glad my spidey sense was right on the article.

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2018 at 11:22 PM

This part also deserves mention: "After defining good and evil, Epicurus defined the good life. To Epicurus, the good life consists of experiencing as much pleasure, with as little pain as humanly possible. Therefore, to achieve the good life, we must strive for easily accessible pleasures in rational amounts. By keeping our desires humble, we can satisfy them over and over again. Any pain they cause us will be smaller than the pleasure we derive from their satisfaction. In this way, anyone can maintain a sustainably high pleasure-to-pain ratio. "

The first two sentences are correct, I think, but the rest does not follow, and is not what Epicurus really said. Number one, there's nothing in Epicurus about "rational" amounts other than that amount which brings more pleasure and less pain. "Rational" is always a suspect word unless it is kept in mind that the reason behind everything is the pleasure/pain calculus. The rest is also fairly accurate, but "keeping our desires humble" isn't necessarily the same as keeping them sustainable, and also isn't necessarily the same for everyone. There's also the question of individual preference in terms of which pleasures someone is going to decide are worthwhile for them to pursue, and there's no Epicurean method that I know of that says that living 5 years as an astronaut exploring space is less to be chosen than spending 10 years lying in bed in a nursing home.

Post by “Cassius” of January 8, 2018 at 11:23 PM

This is significantly off too: "Yet Epicurus seemed to rely on more than just a barley cake and some water for his happiness. Without a job to support him, Epicurus relied on Greece's mild climate and bountiful land. He also relied on a relatively small population to compete with for natural resources. In addition, he relied on natural resources that were clean, and open spaces that were free enough to live on peacefully. He relied on a political system that enforced peace, order, and justice without also encroaching on his way of life."

Read Epicurus's will. Epicurus wasn't poor by any means, and he disposes of a significant number of slaves and pieces of property in his will. This implication that he was living poor and off the land is just not supported by the texts.

Post by "Cassius" of January 8, 2018 at 11:25 PM

I think the latter part of the section on Nature is just the writer's political preferences, yet he makes no references to the large number of PD's on "justice." And so he reaches the conclusion "In combination, these four large changes in nature make modern Epicureanism miserable and nearly impossible." which I suggest is hogwash.

Post by "Cassius" of January 8, 2018 at 11:28 PM

And this sentence is an example of why this is NOT Epicurean thought to say with no exception that everyone should live simply in all circumstances: "Contrary to Epicurean thought, many things that are easy to acquire produce misery."

The writer seems unfamiliar with [VS63](#): "63. There is also a limit in simple living, and he who fails to understand this falls into an error as great as that of the man who gives way to extravagance."

Epicurus didn't advise living simply for the sake of living simply - he advised living simply when it makes sense, and enjoying luxury when it makes sense, in order to maximize pleasure and minimize pain under your individual circumstances.

Post by "Cassius" of January 8, 2018 at 11:30 PM

I'm not going to be able to finish the article tonight, but here's another example:

"Any transition to living out a philosophy starts out slow, so I'll begin by attempting to live humbly."

That violates clear Epicurean doctrine and shows the writer is off base. An Epicurean keeps his eye on the ball, which is living pleurably. Focusing on the technique, rather than on the goal, is a sure way to go off base, because some circumstances require one technique, and other circumstances require other techniques, with the goal always being that of achieving pleasure and avoiding pain.

Post by "brett" of January 8, 2018 at 11:32 PM

Without being overly snarky, I'm quite shocked at the level of ignorance of Dougall. I fear it's endemic of broad and shallow learning. It's exactly why I left academia. No offense but my peers were far more worried about being published than having something worth publishing. Philosophy in modern academia has no interest in 'healing'.

Post by "jbaker" of January 8, 2018 at 11:54 PM

You'll brook no argument there Brett! Publish or perish! Academia in general is hitting a wall of insensibility and delirium.