

A Facebook Question On Continental Philosophy and Nate's Response

Post by "Cassius" of January 22, 2023 at 8:53 AM

[Admin Edit - This [Facebook Exchange](#) is far beyond me but Nate's answer looks so worthwhile that I thought we ought to preserve it.

Al Drea -

What do modern Epicureans think about the way ideas from ancient atomism (eg. Epicurus, Lucretius) are used in recent Continental philosophy? I mean writers like Althusser, Deleuze, Badiou, Zizek, etc.

Nate -

Some of their ideas are on point, but most others are dissimilar. For one thing, there is much less of a focus (to the point of rejection) on physics in Continental philosophy. Early Continental philosophy was largely oriented toward the works of Kant whose ethics and metaphysics heavily contrasted with atomism and hedonism. Still, there are similarities. For example, I think Epicurus would have appreciated Derrida's analysis of the relationship between signifiers and that which they signify as well as his critique of "logocentrism". Deconstruction is an effective tool that Epicurus might have used in criticizing popular culture, but the objects of Derrida's focus were not of primary interest to Epicurus. Baudrillard's focus on nihilism is antithetical in tone to Epicureanism, though, his critique of popular culture would have been well received by Epicurus. I don't think that he would have agreed with Sartre's characterization of human life as being Sisyphean or Camus' framing of human existence as alienating and dissociative, though, both philosophers' emphasis on finding answers internally through responsibility and care reflects Epicurus' project. Deleuze's Kantian interest and focus on metaphysics generally floats at the other end of the philosophical pool; Althusser spends a lot of time juggling the Marxist dialectic, and "material" or not, the dialectic connotes Plato to Epicureans; still, the importance each places on the value of the individual in orienting a political narrative strikes me as being Epicurean in tone. Nietzsche is a key point of interest in that he shows no restraint in expressing unconditional admiration for Epicurus, though he later goes on to criticize him in later works. In general, I think we will find more overlap with Epicurean ideas in the modern Analytic tradition than the Continental.

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[Quote from Cassius](#)

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Nate, should I presume that that should have been "contradict" rather than "oontract with" and make that correction in the post above?

Post by "Eikadistes" of January 22, 2023 at 12:38 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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Nate, should I presume that that should have been "contradict" rather than "oontract with" and make that correction in the post above?


It should have been "contrasted", sorry about that.

Post by "Cassius" of January 29, 2023 at 9:06 AM

Elli's Response:

[Nathan Bartman](#) hello my dear friend. IMO Camus wrote a philosophical essay with the Myth of Sisyphus and not Sartre. Camus saw Sisyphus as an example of the universal struggle of human beings held with the responsibility of caring for their existence in an otherwise meaningless world.

The world would have no meaning if the FEELINGS of pleasure and pain did not exist. And these

feelings along with the senses are the dowry given by Nature to us and all the beings. If feelings would not exist, yes indeed, we will act like the robot machines, and the world would be meaningless. And this is what epicureans answer to both Camus and Sartre - for whom, I hope, would had enjoy both their life - otherwise their essays on philosophy were in vain! page not found or type

Moreover, IMO Lucretius does not give rightly the meaning with the myth of Sisyphus. The myth of Sisyphus is not connected entirely with political power, since it could be also connected with a struggle to gain much more wealth. For Epicurus power and wealth are not the goal, these are just means to the goal of pure pleasure. For Epicurus the power is the knowledge of thyself with your next others that is connected with freedom and security, as well as Metrodorus suggests that if you have wealth it is wise to share it with friends (sharing with friends any wealth i.e. feelings and goods, it is also connected with freedom and security that friendship give us) or wealth means also to create, as a free entrepreneur, in your society, jobs, service and goods OR for an artist wealth means to create art. So, for both Metrodorus and Philodemus, having a wealth is as much as for living a life without troubles and in harmony.

In conclusion: We epicureans always are measuring all the means if they bring to us pure pleasure, if they do not bring pleasure this also means that we have made any means and in our case: the power and wealth, as a covering blanket to cover what? The fear of death !

The remembrance of the existence of the fact of the death, and this is the meaning of the myth with Sisyphus, because death had punished Sisyphus to carry the huge rock all of his life. And as Metrodorus remarks in the following sayings, it's not wise to forget that we are mortals and one day we will die. And even the fact to know that we are mortals, for epicureans, gives a big advantage to consider that our life is unique, and there is not a second time, so that we enjoy our life to the fullest and this also gives us the huge meaning to our existence in the Cosmos - that for Greeks the word Cosmos - has the meaning of a beautiful and sparkling JEWEL. And that's the whole point IMO.

The sayings by Metrodorus are:

ES 30. Some men throughout their lives spend their time gathering together the means of life, for they do not see that the draught swallowed by all of us at birth is a draught of death.

ES 31. Against all else it is possible to provide security, but as against death all of us mortals alike dwell in an unfortified city.