

td76's outline

Post by “td76” of April 5, 2018 at 2:43 PM

I think I'm off to a good start, but I'm still thinking about some things.

1. Nature/Physics

- * The universe is only comprised of matter/energy (elemental particles) and space/time (void).
- * Elemental particles combine to form compounds which make up the different substances found in the universe, to include the building blocks of life.
- * Elemental particles act in accordance to natural laws that govern them.
- * Nothing can come from nothing. We do not observe things popping into existence.
- * Nothing can be destroyed to nothing (Law of Conservation of Energy).
- * Higher beings who are deathless likely exist in the universe, but are not supernatural. They are not aware of humans and would not care about us if they were aware.
- * Our world isn't the only one with life on it. (Doctrine of innumerable worlds)
- * The "soul" is not a separate entity from our body. It formed with the body and did not exist before birth, and perishes with the body when we die. I view it as our perceived individual consciousness.
- * Free will.
- * The universe is infinite. There is no observable boundry and the universe is continuing to expand.
- * The universe is eternal. It didn't just pop into existence (Nothing comes from nothing, no creator).

2. Knowledge/Truth

- * The five senses.
- * Nature provides us with the faculty of pleasure (beneficial actions) and pain (detrimental actions). Both mental and physical.

* Anticipations.

3. Ethics/How to live

* Pleasure is the telos of life.

* Natural and necessary desires, which result in pain when not fulfilled, must be satisfied. These desires are simple

foods, water, shelter, clothing, friendship, security, exercise, etc.

* Arrange your life so that the necessary desires can be acquired with little trouble and expense.

* Natural and unnecessary desires, that do not result in pain if not fulfilled must be moderated. These desires are exotic

food and drink, sex, marriage, children, hobbies etc.

* Unnatural and unnecessary desires which are not limited by nature must be avoided. These things are status, extreme wealth,

fame, etc.

* Not all pleasures are to be pursued and not all pains are to be avoided.

* Live unknown.

* Avoid politics.

Post by "Cassius" of April 5, 2018 at 6:29 PM

Good to hear from you TD76! Here are my thoughts on each of your sections, again remembering that there's two ways of looking at these things: (1) Do they accurately reflect Epicurus? and (2) Do we think personally they are correct? My comments are primarily from perspective one:

(1) This one seems very complete, very accurate, and well stated.

(2) This section is probably more difficult, and that's reflected in the brevity of your treatment. What you've said of course is fine, but it's the implications of this section that are the beginning of the stark difference in approach as against the modern world. One of the most important aspects is to address the place and role of "reason" and "logic," and it would be good to expand

this section to address that. It's also important to address what Epicurus meant by "truth," whether it is "relative" or "absolute," etc.

(3) I think perhaps because section (2) is a little abbreviated, section (3) is where you need to probably give the most attention. I grant you that your statements after the first two are consistent with the majority view that you'll find on the internet, but I would suggest to you that once in section (2) you fully take leave from any ideas of "absolute" truth or "absolute" justice or "absolute" morality, you'll have reason to reconsider some of your "must" phrasing in section 3. That's the first question I would pose to you - are these "musts" or are they "should probably depending on the circumstances" rules of thumb? Converting them from "musts" to "tools" helps refocus the emphasis from the "tool" to the result, which is going to vary widely according to circumstances.

I would say the same comment especially applies to "live unknown" and "avoid politics." Those are two of the most common deductions of the "passivist" view of Epicurus, to which I personally suggest people keep an open mind toward whether they might be substantially off base, especially if considered to be "musts." We have many examples in the ancient world of Epicureans who did not "live unknown" or "avoid politics," even including the founders, and certainly considering prominent Epicureans in the Roman world.

So in general I think your comments are a great start at a good outline, and the process of working through it and talking about it will be good for you (and all of us who participate here) because these same questions arise over and over.

When you say you are "still thinking about some things" -- are there any in particular that would be good to discuss?

Post by “td76” of April 6, 2018 at 3:53 AM

Thank you Cassius for taking the time to read what I have submitted and respond with a lot of detail. You've definitely given me some things to think about.

To answer your first question, obviously the natural and necessary desires must be satisfied. To neglect them would result in pain. However, you have made me rethink my position on whether the unnecessary desires be changed from "must" to something more akin to "should" depending on each individual's circumstance. What may apply to me, doesn't necessarily apply to everyone. Obviously, this is subjective to the individual and I thank you for pointing this out to me.

When I say I'm still thinking about things, they mostly lie in epistemology. I don't think I have a good grasp on the application of the Canon when it comes to testing the truth of a statement. I also have a weak understanding of the anticipations and what this faculty is. It would be very helpful to me to form an exercise where the application of the Canon is used to test the truth of a claim. Any help here would be greatly appreciated.

Post by "Cassius" of April 6, 2018 at 6:35 AM

I would recommend starting with the Pontius Pilate question: "What is truth?"

Many people accept the standard implication that "truth" requires identification of something that is true at all times, places, and for all people, but is such a thing even possible? If not, what IS possible? Think about the discussion of images and illusions in Lucretius. The awning at the spectacle casts a color on the Senators. Did that "truly" make the Senators that color?

As for anticipations we have much less to go on, but I follow the DeWitt theory and you should at least consider it before deciding. The issue here revolves around whether anticipations are (1) simply what is referred to as conceptualization after experience (I see these animals standing in the field and I names them cows) or whether (2) they are indeed PREconceptions which operated prior to experience. Again, be sure to read and consider DeWitt on this topic before you accept the majority "conceptualization" view.