

Top Ten Recognizable Epicurean "Slogans"

Post by "Cassius" of March 25, 2024 at 9:19 AM

A post this morning from PeterK about "[all sensations are true](#)" reminded me that we don't have on our front page one of the most recognizable phrases that is attached to Epicurus, along with an explanation. I will remedy that as soon as possible, but this brings to mind that it would be helpful to have a "Top Ten List of Epicurean Slogans."

I don't mean "slogan" in the pejorative sense of something negative, but in the sense of a very recognizable phrasing of words that rings so well that it has come down through the centuries as almost attached to Epicurus's name.

I will set this up as a list, and probably a "poll" so we can rank them, but I need suggestions to add to the list. Here are a few:

1. [Nothing can be created from nothing.](#)
2. [Death is nothing to us](#) (perhaps in extended form: [Death is nothing to us](#), for that which is dissolved is without sensation; and that which lacks sensation is nothing to us.)
3. [All sensations are true.](#)
4. ..."[B]y pleasure we mean the absence of pain."
5. Pleasure is the alpha and omega of the blessed life.
6. Friendship dances around the world, announcing to each of us that we must awaken to happiness. (VS52)
7. Infinite time contains no greater pleasure than limited time, if one measures, by reason, the limits of pleasure. ([PD19](#))
8. ..[T]here is nothing terrible in life for the man who has truly comprehended that there is nothing terrible in not living. [Letter to Menoeceus 125]

I am going to exercise my editorial discretion and exclude from this list the "Tetrapharmakon," as those are not fully accurate to Epicurus' own texts, nor are they debated by opponents of Epicurus in that form. Until the Herculaneum specific text in which it appears was deciphered, that formulation was unknown in discussions of Epicurus surviving from the ancient and medieval periods. (I trust someone will correct me if they have another source besides that scroll which discusses it.)

What other authoritative passages are widely enough known, and have a "ring" to them (rather than being an extended exposition of a detailed point) that they need to be included in this list? Probably at most a single sentence to fit the description of a "slogan" or "memorable line."

Please make suggestions in the thread and then I will expand this first post further.

Post by “Godfrey” of March 25, 2024 at 2:06 PM

VS52. Friendship dances around the world, announcing to each of us that we must awaken to happiness.

Of course the first one that came to mind was the Tetrpharmakon, but I understand your reservations.

Post by “Cassius” of March 25, 2024 at 2:15 PM

Thank Godfrey i am now at home and can type further, and will supplement the list in the first post with that one.

Yes what I am looking for is to make sure I don't overlook some other major doctrinal point for which Epicurus has a well known position. I can rank them in order of notoriety, and those that aren't well known can definitely be on the list. But I am looking for quotes or near quotes (like that one) rather than statements that are arguably not in core Epicurean wording.

As to the gods, it looks to me like if he were quoted widely on the gods it would be on something else rather than not fearing them.

The list probably needs to include a variation of the natural and necessary quote as well.

In the podcast, Cicero is going through in Book 2 and in many cases quoting Epicurus, so there may things from there that fit this description of "slogan" as well.

["All sensations are true"](#) is something I should not have missed including. Apparently even that one may not be an exact quote (if Dewitt's statements about the history are correct) but his position on this seems to have been well known in the ancient world.

Post by “Kalosyni” of March 25, 2024 at 3:49 PM

Perhaps these could be organized by category...and not limited to ten quotes. Here are some suggestions.

--On the gods

- On natural physics
 - On the criteria for truth
 - On pleasure
 - On the telos
 - On happiness
 - On justice
 - On choices and avoidances
 - ...etc...
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Post by “Pacatus” of March 25, 2024 at 4:13 PM

"We must try to make the end of the journey better than the beginning, as long as we are journeying; but when we come to the end, we must be happy and content." (Vatican Saying 48)

Of course, that one I'd hit on right away! 😊 (Though, in deference to Don, I might change "happy" to "cheerful".)

Post by “Eikadistes” of April 12, 2024 at 9:25 AM

"Live unknown."

Post by “Cassius” of April 12, 2024 at 9:33 AM

[Quote from Twentier](#)

"Live unknown."

Nevertheless, good to hear from you Twentier!