

Analyzing The Boeing Astronauts From An Epicurean Perspective

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 4, 2024 at 10:30 AM

This was originally posted in the discussion of the 6/3/24 First Monday Zoom, but was moved to this new thread.

Thanks to those who attended last night's Zoom (a total of 7 attendees). We had a fruitful and enjoyable discussion.

The discussion moved onto the question of whether or not risking one's life for being an astronaut on the Boeing rocket would be a good choice, and whether or not Epicurus would warn against it or support it. We then briefly discussed psychological hedonism.

The issue is: How does one apply an Epicurean analysis to a high-risk activity?

In the meeting Cassius stated that it isn't the longest life but the most pleasant. (Letter to Menoecus) .

However, I believe that there are several ways to interpret this, and I differ from Cassius because I see this is a kind of remedy for when one develops an illness and is faced with death, that one shouldn't feel that one is missing out on a full life.

To see last night's slides and a slightly different question see this post:

Thread

[Health of the Body and Happiness of the Soul -vs- "The Goal is Pleasure"](#)

I have posted below the text from the slides that I presented at the beginning of the last night's Zoom meeting before we jumped into the discussion. I wanted to add that my original direction that I wanted to take this discussion was that I wanted to present the idea that: **to live as Epicureans we need to get more clear about what our life goal is.** Here I mean "goal" in a philosophical sense, not in getting a good career or marriage and family (these could be thought of as a means but not an...



Kalosyni

June 4, 2024 at 1:34 PM

Post by "SillyApe" of September 27, 2024 at 6:35 PM

I am a bit late for this, but, for me personally, it doesn't make much sense to risk one's life in such a way. Obviously, it is left to each person to do the pleasure/pain calculus in their own head and get to their own conclusions, but risking a lifetime of pleasures for one specific, pleasurable moment doesn't do it for me (even if the risk entails a lasting pleasure, such as good memories or self-confidence).

In my opinion, it is only worth risking one's life if your prospects for pleasure without the risk would be very low. For example, let's say you have a son and love him very much. If his life is in danger and you can sacrifice yourself to save him, it may be worth it, as I can't imagine a parent being able to find pleasure while knowing he/she could have saved their child, but didn't. Another example would be if you lived in a terrible dictatorship and had to choose between an oppressive existence under the dictator's government or risking your life to run away.

But, again, it is up to the individual. I myself would not join a Roman legion and go fight in a foreign land willingly, but some Epicureans of the past did that.

Post by "Kalosyni" of September 28, 2024 at 12:13 PM

[SillyApe](#) I would say there are differing views amongst forum members about "risk assessment" and "risk avoidance".

In the opening of Book 2 of Lucretius ' De Rerum Natura, we read:

Quote

Tis sweet, when, down the mighty main, the winds
Roll up its waste of waters, from the land
To watch another's labouring anguish far,
Not that we joyously delight that man
Should thus be smitten, but because 'tis sweet
To mark what evils we ourselves be spared;
'Tis sweet, again, to view the mighty strife
Of armies embattled yonder o'er the plains,
Ourselves no sharers in the peril; but naught
There is more goodly than to hold the high

Serene plateaus, well fortified by the wise,
Whence thou may'st look below on other men
And see them ev'rywhere wand'ring, all dispersed
In their lone seeking for the road of life;

Display More

As far as space travel of any kind, my own feeling is to watch others do it rather than do it myself. Zero gravity is very hard on the human body, and there is the potential for mission mishaps and failures. I find it amazing that anyone even chooses the risk. It is just a hobby of mine to read up about what is happening.

As far as the above Lucretius quote, I would take it to mean that you just can't stop war (or space travel), but you can be happy when you yourself are safe and free from the troubles that accompany those endeavors.

Post by “SillyApe” of September 28, 2024 at 2:35 PM

Oh yeah, I had read this passage before on a Reddit post and I loved it. Epicureanism does have a tremendous power to help us free our life from unnecessary trouble.