

Eclecticism -vs- Clear Knowledge of Epicurean Philosophy -vs- Forming an Individual & Personal Worldview

Post by "Eoghan Gardiner" of November 22, 2023 at 3:40 PM

Admin Note:

This post is copied from an earlier thread and the title has been renamed - it has been edited for brevity and to highlight the main question. For the full original post and earlier thread, you can read it [here](#).

To start with here is two definitions of [Eclecticism](#):

Quote

1. the practice of [deriving](#) ideas, style, or taste from a broad and diverse range of sources. "the eclecticism of his work consciously reflects his upbringing"
2. **PHILOSOPHY** the theories or methods of the ancient Eclectic [philosophers](#), who did not belong to or found any recognized school of thought but selected [doctrines](#) from various schools of thought. "there was a double movement going on, towards Eclecticism on the one side, and towards Scepticism on the other side"

Is it a problem for Epicurean Philosophy?

What is being spoken about with this question is this. **Is Epicurean philosophy lacking in any of it's 3 main parts - Physics, Canon and Ethics so that it needs to be supplemented with another philosophy or practice?**

Many people take bits and pieces of neo-Epicureanism - asceticism, "enjoying cheese", simple pleasures but ignore the entire corpus left behind and being spoke about today, missing the entire reason Epicurus spoke about pleasure to begin with.

Has eclecticism influenced your EP? Do you think it's beneficial, what do you think the dangers are?

Post by "Cassius" of November 22, 2023 at 4:31 PM

Great thread starter Eoghan!

One aspect of this that should be said is that according to our forum rules and reason for the forums existence, we're not going to promote a general eclectic approach here as that is inconsistent with our reason for being here.

But having said that, there is a general issue that everyone faces of putting together one's own life from whatever elements are available, and it's great to discuss in general how to go about thinking of the meaning of consistency and when to deviate from it.

Certainly Epicurus himself was a strong deviator from the consensus that existed when he started!

So this issue touches on questions of skepticism and "waiting" and when and how to make course corrections.

Post by "Cassius" of November 22, 2023 at 6:14 PM

Probably worth restating that these two aren't inconsistent from my personal point of view:

1 - From my point of view, everyone has a right to make up their minds and do whatever they want to do, and I think in general we want maximum freedom of expression and action in the world. I know that I want that for myself, and so I don't think it's a good idea to do anything to deny it to others.

2 - On the other hand, from my point of view as well, every "group project" in life requires some degree of agreement among the members of the group on what the project is and how to attain it. This website is all "I" (our core people) can really speak for, and we have a right and obligation to set out clearly what we're doing so that people who invest their time and effort in it will know the ground rules before they start making that investment -- so that they can count on their investment meaning something as they themselves set out to contribute.

We'll do our best here at the forum to balance both those considerations, but (2) is going to take priority over (1) because we're just one website, one location, and it's easy for alternative views to coalesce elsewhere.

Now having repeated that again about what "WE're" doing, there is still a "philosophical" issue with questions such as Eoghan raised in terms of:

1 - When we say "eclectic" and "eclecticism" what do we really mean? In my view what we're really talking about is a semi-philosophical position that "consistency" is not important or that it is secondary to a particular result. In a sense we all agree, after concluding that pleasure/happiness is the goal, that "whatever works in our case" is actually the right way to look at things. However from the Epicurean viewpoint there are in fact unchanging and unchangeable aspects of the universe that derive from the atoms that we can't change no matter how much we mix and match ideas. It's at that level I think that it's most worthwhile to talk about "eclecticism" as a controversial viewpoint.

2 - That still leaves huge variety of alternative choices in how one lives an Epicurean life, and I think most all of us encourage experimentation and variety, but it's not experimentation or variety for the sake of experimentation or variety, it's calibration of alternatives in the pursuit of pleasure, within boundaries that we agree on such as no supernatural gods and no life after death and the primary role of the senses over abstract propositional logic -- things like that which serve as boundaries that we can all know about and understand through reading Epicurus.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 4, 2025 at 11:41 AM

I find that the above two posts by Cassius are very helpful for contemplating the issue of eclecticism, and I recommend anyone who has been thinking about the issue of eclecticism to read.

I think it is important to understand and realize that there are various ways in which we all approach the study of Epicurean philosophy -- there are variations in each person's desires and reasons for studying, and variations in what each person hopes to gain from study.

And we support:

- 1) study of Epicurean philosophy
- 2) formation of an individual and personal worldview

The challenge is that this forum is a place to study "what is Epicurean philosophy" while also being a place to "develop and form one's individual and personal worldview" (and we do hope that individuals who study Epicurean philosophy also incorporate many aspects of it into their own personal worldview).

We hope to keep the study of "what is Epicurean philosophy" free from "eclectic" influences, so that we are clear about what exactly Epicurean philosophy is.

Yet, we also urge each person to develop their own personal worldview.

And now my question is that when you combine these two aspects, how to you avoid problems (I need to define what I think the problems are soon in another post).

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 5, 2025 at 10:21 AM

Most "*Yo, my dude, think about it like this...*" pseudo-thinkers I know are lazy eclectics.

I think the Epicurean path requires stated devotion, frankly, like Christians, in admitting that we lack the tools to perfect our own lives, and we need a path to guide us.

My guide is the guy who figured out quantum indeterminism, and doesn't scold me for beating-off.

Post by “kochiekoch” of January 7, 2025 at 6:25 PM

[Quote from Eikadistes](#)

My guide is the guy who figured out quantum indeterminism, and doesn't scold me for beating-off.

Werner Heisenburg? 😄