

Am I an Epicurean?

Post by “KDF” of April 28, 2018 at 3:18 PM

I want to start by warning potential readers of this post, that it is highly personal, and that I will be happy to remove it if it is not appropriate for this site.

I have spent much of my adult life working on a code or set of goals that are consistent with my philosophical principals, and could provide a platform from which to enjoy my life. I have summarized these into 5 goals, and while they have evolved over time, they have worked for me for the last few years. Here they are:

1. Do what I want, when I want, with no guilt - After some introspection I realized that I spent much of my time worried about the impression that I made or the impact of my actions on others. I realized that most of this worry was pointless, and that when there was something to worry about it was not nearly as significant as I made it seem. Internalizing this goal has helped me to lift the sense of dread that had followed me for years.

2. Family - Make them happy, and don't push them away - I realized that I have a tendency to push people away. While I am superficially social, I find most relationships inconvenient. I generally don't want things from people socially, and never have much trouble putting relationships in that past. I found that by reminding myself that I don't want to push my family away (by family I mean my wife and kids), that I felt much better. These are the people that I want in my life, and I want to do everything that I can to make their lives better.

3. Super Slam (Hunting) - This might seem a little out of left field, and I am certainly not trying to offend anyone's sensibilities. Hunting is a central part of my life, and I have been pursuing a goal of harvesting all 29 of North America's big. This is a significant goal that has only been achieved by 153 people. I am currently 44 and plan to complete this by the time I am 55.

4. No Work - I never liked working, and it has been torture for me for the last 25 years. I am fortunate enough to be in a position that I could retire comfortably my most standards, but found that the idea of not working carried with it a ton baggage. What would people think if I didn't work? How much did my career define my identity? What if I want more stuff in a few years? I own a company, and just made the decision to let my employees do my job. It is an experiment that could result in the company failing. If the company survives it will be great for me and the employees. If the company fails, I will do my best to help the employees land somewhere. Either way I am not going to work another day.

5. Don't Waste Time - From the day we are born, we are all dying. Life flies by. I don't want to waste a minute of it doing something I don't want to do.

There it is. My life laid bare. Again, don't hesitate to tell me that this is not the place for my BS.

Post by "Cassius" of April 28, 2018 at 4:59 PM

KDF, here are my thoughts - not intending to be judgmental, and certainly I am not qualified to define who is and who is not an Epicurean. But based on my reading and study, here is what I would say:

What you have described is a set of attitudes toward your that certainly indicate that you are generally working to apply a pleasure/pain analysis to your life, and that of course is consistent with Epicurus' advice. But since the topic of your question is "Am I an Epicurean?" I think it would be necessary to know a lot more before answering. Of course not everyone who pursues pleasure is an Epicurean, and there is a lot more to the philosophy than that single ethical conclusion.

I think that's the consistent issue we run into that people need to think about more deeply - your answers indicate that you are probably on the Epicurean course ethically, but whether your particular decisions have been reached via a line of thinking that Epicurus would recommend depends on your circumstances, and on your foundations in the other branches of Epicurean philosophy.

For example you do not mention your view of "gods," or "fate," or the meaning of "death." And you do not indicate your view of the issue of knowledge/certainty/confidence, and of logic vs the senses, in your observations and your conclusions. I argue that "ethics" is far downstream of those more fundamental issues about the nature of life and the universe. Unless one has a grounding in those issues, and more or less accepts the Epicurean viewpoint on them, then it's likely that at some point of stress or misfortune that the person "falls away" from Epicurean philosophy, because they've never really understood the framework in the first place.

So my preliminary comment is that definitely your ethics are at least superficially reconcilable with Epicurus, but to answer "Am I an Epicurean" would require considerably more information. Feel free to elaborate or not, but thank you for posting!

Post by "Cassius" of April 28, 2018 at 5:13 PM

This is such an excellent question, and one that is asked so frequently, that I am creating [a separate forum](#) for others (especially new readers) to post their own versions.

Post by “Hiram” of May 4, 2018 at 2:39 PM

[Quote from KDF](#)

4. No Work - I never liked working, and it has been torture for me for the last 25 years. I am fortunate enough to be in a position that I could retire comfortably my most standards, but found that the idea of not working carried with it a ton baggage. What would people think if I didn't work? How much did my career define my identity? What if I want more stuff in a few years? I own a company, and just made the decision to let my employees do my job. It is an experiment that could result in the company failing. If the company survives it will be great for me and the employees. If the company fails, I will do my best to help the employees land somewhere. Either way I am not going to work another day.

Below are my Reasonings on Philodemus' scroll on Property Management, which give moral guidance re: autarchy, the most relevant subject in Epicurean philosophy. There, one of the seven conclusions, is "the philosopher does not toil". Please read and I hope you profit from reading this:

<http://societyofepicurus.com/on-philodemus-...agement-part-i/>

<http://societyofepicurus.com/on-philodemus-...gement-part-ii/>