

Brochure By AxA - Toronto

Post by “AxA” of February 18, 2025 at 12:18 PM

Here's my draft brochure for the in-person Eikas this weekend. As a tri-fold brochure it starts on the right panel of page 1, then all of page 2, then finishes on the left and middle panels of page 1.

Curious to hear your feedback and especially if anyone feels I'm misrepresenting Epicurus's views.

Post by “Cassius” of February 18, 2025 at 1:49 PM

That's an excellent draft AxA. I like the fact that virtually all of it comes from some original source, which you've cited, so that arms you against accusations that you're misrepresenting or freelancing anything. You've covered a lot of good information and I think that's a much better approach than simply repeating a few generic slogans in large font sizes. The way you've done it results in a handout that's worth keeping and referring to in the future.

As for the opening, you can easily find my personal reservations about featuring the Tetracharmakon as a leadoff pitch elsewhere on the forum (for example [here](#).) That's why we don't feature those here at EpicureanFriends, but everyone has to make their own decision about that.

Even from my perspective there's a bright side to what I consider to be phrasing that Epicurus himself would not have used. (I refer to especially the ambiguity of 1 and 2, and also to the inability of 3 and 4 to stand alone without a great deal of explanation).

The problems with each of the four can be used to launch discussion into the original form of the first four [Principal Doctrines](#). In explaining why the Tetracharmakon phrasing doesn't necessarily follow from the full text of PD 1-5, you can bring out the full impact of issues which the Tetracharmakon itself obscures.

But like I said, everyone has to decide for themselves how they want to pitch the Tetracharmakon. Sometimes it's desirable to open a conversation with wording which requires lots of clarification later. And just as I'm mentioning here in this post, having a debate on the Tetracharmakon is a good way to clarify important issues quickly.

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 18, 2025 at 3:09 PM

[AxA](#) I'm mulling over some parts of your pamphlet, which is generally good, yet probably I would phrase some of the subtitles differently (personal preference).

Some thoughts regarding VS04 translation, which can vary depending on the translator...especially the phrase "easy to disregard"... [Don](#) maybe you can help to check what the ancient Greek words are in this??? ...ancient Greek over at monadnock.net

“Every pain is easy to disregard; for that which is intense is of brief duration, and those bodily pains that last long are mild.” [VS4]

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 18, 2025 at 3:41 PM

Regarding the heading in AxA's pamphlet: "Trust your senses over your thoughts" - this phrase is not found in anything that Epicurus said.

Post by “Cassius” of February 19, 2025 at 8:56 AM

To follow up on what Kalosyni asked above, I see that we have here on the website as Vatican Saying 4:

VS04. All bodily suffering is negligible; for that which causes acute pain has short duration, and that which endures long in the flesh causes but mild pain. Note 4: Alternate: All bodily suffering is easy to disregard: for that which causes acute pain has short duration, and that which endures long in the flesh causes but mild pain.

However Principal Doctrine 4 we have:

[PD04](#). Pain does not last continuously in the flesh, but the acutest pain is there for a very short time, and even that which just exceeds the pleasure in the flesh does not continue for many days at once. But chronic illnesses permit a predominance of pleasure over pain in the flesh.

I was thinking that all of the first set of doctrines, including 4, were exactly the same, but apparently there's a significant difference in that opening phrase. (And checking Bailey's extant remains, I see that of the first 8, he reprints 4 and 7 as being different. Bailey uses "negligible.")

It's possible that we've discussed this before but I don't recall. Do [Don](#) or [Bryan](#) (who I perceive to be our current best translators) have any comment on this opening phrasing (negligible / disregard / despise) in VS4?

In general I see the PD's are more reliable than the Vatican Sayings, and because I think PD3 makes a point that is much more like Epicurean thinking, I think it's noncontroversial why [PD03](#) is phrased as it is.

But the translations of VS04 are more questionable, even though arguable. There are numbers of relevant cites, including Torquatus saying that mental pleasures and pains are regularly more intense than bodily ones. However some of these translations veer toward flippancy in a way that might not be appropriate. If there are translation options that would bring it more in line with Epicurus' standard level of compassion, those might be preferable. Epicurus didn't call his own pain of his last day "negligible" or "easy to disregard," but he did say that he was still happy at offsetting his joy against it.

I wouldn't call that "disregarding" the pain, or classifying it as negligible either. "Despising" the pain as an evaluation of it might actually be slightly better, and also more consistent with the way Epicurus says to treat bad habits as men who have long caused us harm.

Any thoughts?

Post by "Bryan" of February 19, 2025 at 10:21 AM

The word we are looking at is **εὐκαταφρόνητος**.

Bailey does bring out the "despise" aspect of **καταφρονεῖν** (which does not have the good/easy "eu"):

[Bailey 10.80b] So we must carefully consider in how many ways a similar phenomenon is produced on earth, when we reason about the causes of celestial phenomena and all that is imperceptible to the senses; and we must despise those persons who do not recognize either what exists or comes into being in one way only, or that which may occur in several ways in the case of things which can only be seen by us from a distance, and further are not aware under what conditions it is impossible to have peace of mind.

Here is how it fits:

<p>ἡ φροντίς αἱ φροντίδες</p>	<p>concern</p>	<p>ΦΡΟΝΤΙΣ mind</p>
<p>καταφρονεῖν + gen</p>	<p>to disregard</p>	<p>ΚΑΤΑΦΡΟΝΕΙΝ mind down upon</p>
<p>ὁ εὐφρονοῦν οἱ εὐφρονοῦντες</p>	<p>he who thinks well</p>	<p>ΕΥΦΡΟΝΟΥΝ good mind</p>
<p>εὐκαταφρόνητος (ov)</p>	<p>easy to disregard</p>	<p>ΕΥΚΑΤΑΦΡΟΝΗΤΟΣ good mind down upon</p>

The word places the object of consideration below (**ΚΑΤΑ**) the subject that is considering (**ΦΡΟΝ**) and affords agency (**ΕΥ**) to that subject. So we could bend it up to "good to despise" or down to "easily disregardable," with lots of options in the middle.

Post by “AxA” of February 19, 2025 at 11:53 AM

Thank you all for the feedback!

I had no idea that there were such reservations about the tetrapharmakos formulation. I'm going to keep it, but in introducing it I'm going to emphasize how it's a highly simplified "kindergarten" version of the philosophy. Or even ancient "clickbait" lol

From my understanding of the PD/VS parallels, PD1 and VS1 match, PD2 and VS2 match, but PD3 doesn't have a VS parallel, and PD4 matches VS3.

For the VS4 translation: I'm going to switch "disregard" to "despise". "Disregard" just sounds too dismissive for pain, too much like the word "ignore". I believe "despise" in antique usage meant something very close to "disregard"/"ignore", but it also has a kind of noble "rising above" and "holding in contempt" flavour to it which I think would be more meaningful to anyone who is actually in pain.

Kalosyni, your brochure looks great. I like the garden motifs like with the vines. I want to collect imagery like this, make a collection of anything that brings out that Epicurean Garden feeling. I see some good images in the gallery here, but I'd like to see more of these kinds of "flavour" images that do not necessarily reference specifically Epicurean things but support the overall "vibe".

I'm going to change "Trust your senses over your thoughts" to "Trust your senses over your theories". "Thoughts" might be too general and suggest we should doubt our own minds in general, whereas I think the contrast of senses vs theories makes it clear what we should base our thoughts on.

Post by “Cassius” of February 19, 2025 at 1:55 PM

[Quote from AxA](#)

Or even ancient "clickbait" lol

That's a good joke but I wouldn't rule it out entirely.

We have the article here (professor [Gellar-Goad](#)) which argues that "The sun is the size it appears to be" was intentionally phrased as a "shibboleth" or litmus test of proper understanding.

"[Death is nothing to us](#)" is pretty similar in impact, not to mention "pleasure is the absence of pain." And we have in Diogenes Laertius that Epicurus was known to say spicy things about other philosophers.

Add to that the statement from Cicero's on the nature of the gods that "Hereupon Velleius began, *in the confident manner (I need not say) that is customary with Epicureans, afraid of nothing so much as lest he should appear to have doubts about anything.* One would have supposed he had just come down from the assembly of the gods in the intermundane spaces of Epicurus!"

So it's entirely possible that certain phrasings were intentionally presented in controversial ways to create what some people call "teachable moments" where you're shocked into looking at things in a new way.

One thing the Epicureans were not was shy, retiring, wallflowers who drew back from the first hint of controversy!

Post by "AxA" of February 20, 2025 at 10:20 AM

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I like this attitude of fearless playfulness. Seems to be something about the Epicurean perspective that brings out this feeling.

I like the admonition ([VS41](#)) that we must "philosophize, laugh, and manage our business" all together. Might even think of it as a triangle that needs all three sides to be maintained. Sound philosophy, prudent practical operations, and an active sense of humour. Whenever I become too dull and serious I know I've gone off somewhere.

Post by "Cassius" of February 20, 2025 at 10:57 AM

[Quote from AxA](#)

I like this attitude of fearless playfulness. Seems to be something about the Epicurean perspective that brings out this feeling.

Yes. I think it's very important. It's like Lucretius is warning about, we're up against a veritable army of nay-sayers and manipulators, and you need an upbeat and even devil-may-care attitude to stand up to what's coming up against you.

And two paraphrase of one of many relevant quotes would be that there can be nothing terrible in living for the person who knows that there is nothing terrible in not living -- and that you can be confident due to what's wrapped up in the allusion that it is always possible to "leave the theatre when the play ceases to please us" -- of course most of us are lucky today that the play generally doesn't get that bad.

Post by "Kalosyni" of February 20, 2025 at 11:06 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

we're up against a veritable army of nay-sayers and manipulators,

Or to say it another way...some people feel very attached to ideas about God and the supernatural, and may feel upset by ideas which are nearly similar to atheism (except for very small differences). And we see Epicurus taught in his private garden rather than in public spaces. Thus there is the debate on "live unknown". We've got a thread discussing various interpretations on that [here](#).

Post by "Patrikios" of February 22, 2025 at 9:21 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

of course most of us are lucky today that the play generally doesn't get that bad.

and having Friends with their encouragement helps to keep us in Life's theater.