

April 7, 2025 - First Monday Epicurean Philosophy Zoom - Agenda

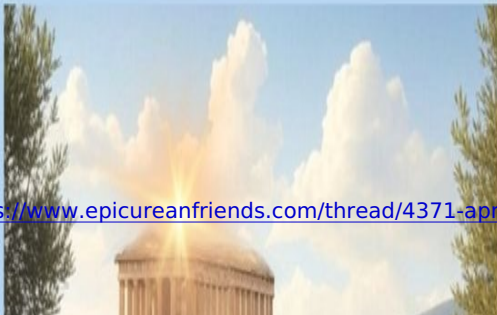
Post by “Kalosyni” of April 3, 2025 at 9:18 AM



April 7, 2025
8pm ET - Via Zoom

First Monday Epicurean Philosophy Hour

"Meditate therefore on these things **and things akin to them** night and day by yourself; and with a companion like to yourself, and never shall you be disturbed waking or asleep, but you shall live like a god among men. For a man who lives among immortal blessings is not like unto a mortal being." (Letter to Menoeceus)



This month's discussion topic:

The Delphic Maxims Through the

Coming up this next Monday on April 7th - First Monday Epicurean Philosophy Zoom Discussion!

This month's topic: "The Delphic Maxims Through the Lens of Epicurean Philosophy"

Here are some reference websites if you are interested in reading about it before the meeting:

[Temple of Apollo at Delphi – Ancient Greece: Φώς & Λέξη](#)

[List of maxims](#)

[Wikipedia entry](#)

Agenda:

- Welcome and round-the-table greetings
- Short presentation on the Delphic Maxims (by Kalosyni)
- Discussion: "The Delphic Maxims Through the Lens of Epicurean Philosophy"

Note on how to attend: If you have not previously attended a First Monday, or have been absent from the forum for a while, let us know if you are interested so we can add you to the meeting link private message which will go out the day before the meeting.

Hope to see you there! 😊

Edit note: Here is [another website](#) with slightly different translations of the maxims.

Additional edit note: This may be of interest - [commentary](#).

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 6, 2025 at 2:47 PM

This is also relevant for tomorrow evening's Zoom discussion, on the Delphic Maxims:

Quote

Later tradition ascribed to each sage a pithy saying of his own, but ancient as well as modern scholars have doubted the legitimacy of such ascriptions.^[12] A compilation of

147 maxims, inscribed at Delphi, was preserved by the fifth century CE scholar [Stobaeus](#) as "Sayings of the Seven Sages", [\[13\]](#) but "the actual authorship of the ... maxims set up on the Delphian temple may be left uncertain. Most likely they were popular proverbs, which tended later to be attributed to particular sages."[\[14\]](#)

[Seven Sages of Greece](#)

Post by “Cassius” of April 7, 2025 at 9:52 PM

As to the "Beautiful" being trademarked Platonism, I believe the citation I was trying to remember tonight was the following, which in this case (from Bryan's Epicurea PDF) translates as "honorable" and "excellence" rather than "beautiful," though I think i have seen it translated "beautiful" as well:

Quote

Aetius, Doxography, XII p. 547A: And in his work On the End-Goal, he says again: "{=U70}" And in other passages, he says "I spit upon the honorable and those who vainly admire it, whenever it produces no pleasure."

Plutarch, Against Kōlōtēs, 30, p. 1124E: ... and when men take for sages those who "spit on excellence, unless pleasure attends it." [c.f. 1124E @ U368]

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 8, 2025 at 7:30 AM

Thank you to everyone who attended last night's Zoom. I found it to be a very interesting discussion last night, and still thinking about some aspects of it (especially the discussion between [AxA](#) and [TauPhi](#)).

Without a god which gave moral mandates as absolutes, then we see that moral precepts are a product of humans living together with other humans and desiring to find safety, trust, and peace, rather than creating fear, distrust, anger and perpetual violence. So we as groups of humans living in community can then come up with a set of actions which result in better living conditions, and from these we create laws of justice, and then these laws must also be backed

up by an honest judicial system to justly punish those who break the laws. (The punish aspect is also a protective aspect).

For any further discussion on the specific Delphic maxims, there is an earlier thread that we can use:

Post

[Delphic Maxims from an Epicurean Perspective](#)

Thought about this on my morning walk today. The three maxims said to have been inscribed on the temple of the Oracle at Delphi are probably most well known through Socrates emphasis of "know thyself." But there were three inscriptions plus 147 maxims ascribed to the Seven Sages. For a summary, check out the Wikipedia article:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delphic_maxims?wprov=sfla1

What got me on my walk was thinking about the first maxim, then that led to thinking about the others.

My question...



Don

June 19, 2023 at 12:22 PM

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 8, 2025 at 7:34 AM

We also have these two sub-forums:

[Justice \(Including Security And Social Structures\)](#)

[Virtue \(A Means for Pleasure, Not an End in Itself\)](#)

Post by “Cassius” of April 8, 2025 at 7:54 AM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Without a god which gave moral mandates as absolutes, then we see that moral precepts are a product of humans living together with other humans and desiring to find safety, trust, and peace, rather than creating fear, distrust, anger and perpetual violence. So we as groups of humans

The key being that just humans (not gods) develop language, WE develop these ideas, and they are not sanctioned or handed down by any supernatural being, nor do they have any eternal transcendent existence. And when circumstances change, we change those ideas of morality to fit circumstances, we don't try to fit the circumstances to some arbitrary and unchanging notion of what is "just." This is explained at length and forcefully in [PD37](#) and 38:

Quote

[PD37](#). Among actions which are sanctioned as just by law, that which is proved, on examination, to be of advantage, in the requirements of men's dealings with one another, has the guarantee of justice, whether it is the same for all or not. But if a man makes a law, and it does not turn out to lead to advantage in men's dealings with each other, then it no longer has the essential nature of justice. And even if the advantage in the matter of justice shifts from one side to the other, but for a while accords with the general concept, it is nonetheless just for that period, in the eyes of those who do not confound themselves with empty sounds, but look to the actual facts. [PD38](#). Where, provided the circumstances have not been altered, actions which were considered just have been shown not to accord with the general concept, in actual practice, then they are not just. But where, when circumstances have changed, the same actions which were sanctioned as just no longer lead to advantage, they were just at the time, when they were of advantage for the dealings of fellow-citizens with one another, but subsequently they are no longer just, when no longer of advantage.

Post by "AxA" of April 8, 2025 at 4:33 PM

What I found especially insightful about this conversation was it made me realize that while I have always accepted the finality of my death, I have a mental timeline that projects from ancient history out into the future, and I imagine myself as part of that timeline. So I judge my life against this expanded sense of time, and see it as very inconvenient to only be alive for a tiny part of it. Without realizing it, I have been applying vain standards on myself. Now that I see this, I can start to imagine what it would be like to be fully comfortable living entirely within

my available time window. Still quite an adjustment though!

Post by “AxA” of April 8, 2025 at 4:42 PM

I can't fathom the meaning of beauty (or honour or excellence, translating the same word as beauty) that does not bring pleasure. So I think I could only interpret that passage as meaning the important thing to focus on is the pleasure, rather than some abstract standard of beauty/honour/excellence that loses touch with the basic intrinsic pleasure that all beauty produces.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Quote

Aetius, Doxography, XII p. 547A: And in his work On the End-Goal, he says again:

"{=U70}" And in other passages, he says "I spit upon the honorable and those who vainly admire it, whenever it produces no pleasure."

Plutarch, Against Kōlōtēs, 30, p. 1124E: ... and when men take for sages those who

"spit on excellence, unless pleasure attends it." [c.f. 1124E @ U368]

Post by “AxA” of April 8, 2025 at 4:59 PM

I'm not convinced of the value of "morality" as a concept as I think my preference to behave in ways considered "moral" comes from a combination of the practical value of human cooperation as well as an aesthetic sense of "immoral" actions being "ugly". But when I ask why they're ugly, I'm not clear on the origin of this aesthetic sense that finds unjust actions ugly and therefore painful.

Post by “Kalosyni” of April 8, 2025 at 6:25 PM

Here is another slant on: "I spit upon the beautiful if it does not bring pleasure"... Article: "Suffering for Beauty Has Ancient Roots":

Quote

Men and women in ancient Greece took things a step further by slathering lead not just around their eyes, but all over their face. Their white lead face cream, according to a 2001 article in the journal Clinics in Dermatology, was designed to “clear complexions of blemishes and to improve the color and texture of the skin” and was such a big hit that lead-based face masks soon became all the rage.

‘Dead white’

Despite lead's health hazards, ranging from skin ruptures to madness to infertility, upper-crust Romans went on to use white lead (or cerussa, the key ingredient in those once-popular lead paints) to lighten their faces, then topped that off with a bit of red lead (or minium, currently used in the manufacture of batteries and rust-proof paint) for that “healthy” rose glow. Lead was also a major ingredient in the hair dyes of the day, either intentionally or otherwise. According to scholars, the place was lousy with lead and some have conjectured that lead-lined viaducts, cooking pots and wine vessels — and the resultant poisoning — helped bring about the fall of the empire.

[Source](#)

Post by “Cassius” of April 8, 2025 at 7:15 PM

[Quote from AxA](#)

So I judge my life against this expanded sense of time, and see it as very inconvenient to only be alive for a tiny part of it.

Yes I feel the same way, and I think it's important not to let the Epicurean view that you don't need an unlimited time to attain the fullness of pleasure lead you to think that it's entirely irrelevant how long you live. I don't think that was Epicurus' view at all - as evidenced by his comments about the desirability of life and his opposition to suicide.

[Quote from AxA](#)

I can't fathom the meaning of beauty (or honour or excellence, translating the same word as beauty) that does not bring pleasure.

Ha -- YOU can't, nor can most normal people in my view, but apparently Plato and the stoics had no problem thinking that way at all, and finding "beauty" to have nothing to do with pleasure whatsoever.

[Quote from AxA](#)

I'm not convinced of the value of "morality" as a concept

Yep. "Morality" can be a useful term, sort of like "ethics," but like most (all?) abstractions it has no real meaning outside of particular circumstances. You can say that "pleasure and pain" are also tied to circumstances, but Nature gives you a very direct awareness of those without need of logical or conceptual identification. Pleasure and pain can also be viewed as abstractions in the way we use the terms, but they are immediately traceable back to the "feeling" given by nature.

Post by "AxA" of April 9, 2025 at 5:36 PM

Once again the uniquely tangible reality of pleasure and pain make them much more reliable guides than any concept we can think of!

It's something so "childlike" and basic, it's surprising more philosophies don't make more use of it.