

λάθε βιώσας - "Live Unknown"

Post by "Matt" of January 6, 2019 at 5:12 PM

What is everyone's thoughts on **λάθε βιώσας**?

Let me say that I am a huge proponent of this idea. In a world where social media and the media continue to invade our private lives, I've found that excusing myself from that arena and those platforms has been an incredible relief! That alone has given me great pleasure. Getting the social spotlight off of me.

With anonymity can come peace and privacy. Something that has become increasingly rare.

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2019 at 6:42 PM

I think we're on the verge of unprecedented censorship, with the next frontier being banned from financial transactions if you don't have "social credits" acceptable to the major banks. Very scary stuff so it will pay to be as careful as possible.

Post by "Godfrey" of January 6, 2019 at 6:50 PM

Sorry to expose my ignorance, but what's that in English?

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2019 at 7:38 PM



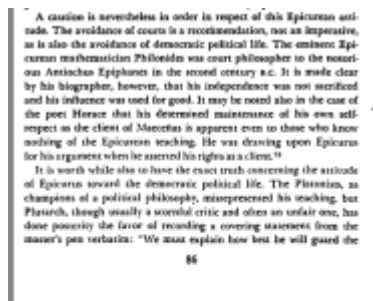
Godfrey this "live unknown" is a phrase that Epicurean commentators talk about a lot, but I think it needs to be considered VERY carefully. It comes to us without any context in an Epicurean text, I believe through Plutarch (?) (I will look it up after I finish this note.) People who take a very passivist/quietist view of Epicurus construe it strongly as if it were written in stone for all contexts, while I think a more balanced view is that - like most of his doctrines - how to apply it depends on the context.

Clearly there were multiple Epicurean sayings indicating that it is a good idea to live free of too much entanglement with too many people -- to stay away from politics as a career path - and things like that. So no doubt there is a grain of important truth here, but we can see from the examples of many Roman and Greek Epicureans - including Epicurus himself - that we shouldn't take this too literally.

However given all those caveats what LD and i are saying I think still stands that it is a good idea to be cautious with giving up too much of one's privacy.

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2019 at 7:46 PM

Still haven't found the cite yet, but this is an explanation of how this doctrine was qualified, from Chapter 4 of EAHP ---



MYTILENE AND LAMPACUS

and as established by Nature and how a man will not deliberately from the outset proceed to obtain the office in the gift of the multitude."¹⁴

Thus Epicurus did not unconditionally condemn the holding of public office; what he did condemn was making a career of it, which meant studying rhetoric and "deliberately" placing one's happiness "from the outset" at the mercy of others.

<https://newepicurean.com/a-time-for-all...cinnatus-model/>

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2019 at 7:49 PM

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/664-%CE%BB%CE%AC%CE%B8%CE%B5-%CE%B2%CE%B9%CF%8E%CF%83%CE%B1%CF%82-live-unknown/>

Good grief, I hope that THIS is not the only source of this phrase. I am remembering Plutarch but so far this is all I can find:

Plutarch, *Is "Live Unknown" a Wise Precept?* 3, p. 1129A: {Rhetorically addressing Epicurus} Don't send books everywhere to advertise your wisdom to every man and woman ... What sense is there in so many tens of thousands of lines honoring Metrodorus, Aristobulus, and Chaeredemus, and published with so much industry that they cannot remain unknown even after they're dead? Who are you to call for the obliteration of virtue, the uselessness of skills, silence to philosophy, and forgetfulness of good deeds?

<http://www.attalus.org/translate/epicurus.html>

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2019 at 7:52 PM

This is typical of what I see. From Bailey, it is included in a list with absolutely no context whatsoever. I begin to suspect that the Plutarch reference above (hardly a friendly source) is the only real cite:

V. FRAGMENTS 139

things, and when we are prosperous to understand that we are unfortunate, and when we are unfortunate not to regard prosperity lightly, and to receive unmoved the good things which come from fortune and to range ourselves boldly against the seeming evils which it brings: for all that the many regard as good or evil is fleeting, and wisdom has nothing in common with fortune.

58. He who least needs tomorrow, will most gladly go to meet to-morrow.

59. I spot upon the beautiful and those who wisely admire it, when it does not produce any pleasure.

61. The laws exist for the sake of the wise, not that they may not do wrong, but that they may not suffer it.

62. Even if they are able to escape punishment, it is impossible to see security for escape; and so the fear of the future which always presses upon them does not suffer them to be happy or to be free from anxiety in the present.

63. The man who has attained the rational end of the human race will be equally good, even though no one is present.

64. A man who craves fear cannot be free from fear.

65. The happy and blessed state belongs not to abundance of riches or dignity of position or any office or power, but to freedom from pain and moderation in feelings and an attitude of mind which imposes the laws ordained by nature.

66. Live unknown.

67. We must say how best a man will maintain the natural end of life, and how an one will nobly at first aim at public office.

<https://archive.org/stream/Epicuru.../search/unknown>

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2019 at 8:37 PM

I am so glad you asked the question Godfrey - I am reviewing this now -- here is the cite --

<https://archive.org/stream/moralia.../search/unknown>

Post by "Matt" of January 6, 2019 at 9:26 PM

I think a good way to view this concept, as with many other Epicurean concepts, with a mind of personal prudence.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/664-%CE%BB%CE%AC%CE%B8%CE%B5-%CE%B2%CE%B9%CF%8E%CF%83%CE%B1%CF%82-live-unknown/>

This does not mean, in my opinion, to become an ascetic or a hermit, but rather to limit exposure to public life that may be unnecessary. Especially within the realm of social media. I've found it is far more peaceful to stay out of the spotlight.

Post by "Matt" of January 6, 2019 at 9:37 PM

I would say too this does not mean shirking ones civic duty to the detriment of ones self (such as avoiding ALL politics and not participating in governmental process like voting or rallying for an important cause for yourself). Such inactivity may lead to pains or regret if not prudently acted upon.

This is really a position of avoiding unnecessary exposure to the public eye. If it's unnecessary it probably isn't worth the exposure.

Post by "Godfrey" of January 7, 2019 at 12:50 AM

Thanks for clarifying that.

It seems like many things in EP are not absolutes but are subject to each person's contemplation with respect to the Canon and the types of desire. "Live unknown" appears to be one of those things.

Social media is a great example of the pros and cons of the idea!

Post by "Cassius" of January 7, 2019 at 8:52 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

It seems like many things in EP are not absolutes but are subject to each person's contemplation with respect to the Canon and the types of desire

I have come to think that that is one of the most important aspects of understanding Epicurean philosophy. In the absence of gods or of central points of reference within the universe or of "fate" which would serve as a guarantee that the same action in human affairs would always

produce the same result, it doesn't seem possible that it is even possible that there could be a set of absolute rules that applies in all situations. That's a pretty disconcerting realization for those of us who (like me) were raised on absolute rules, but given the Epicurean view of the nature of the universe it really couldn't be any other way. [PD10](#) is pretty stark in throwing this in our face, but all of the final 10 PD's essentially make the same point - that there aren't absolute rules. And that leaves as the thing that is absolute for us our sense of pleasure and pain and the "programming" which nature gives us at birth.