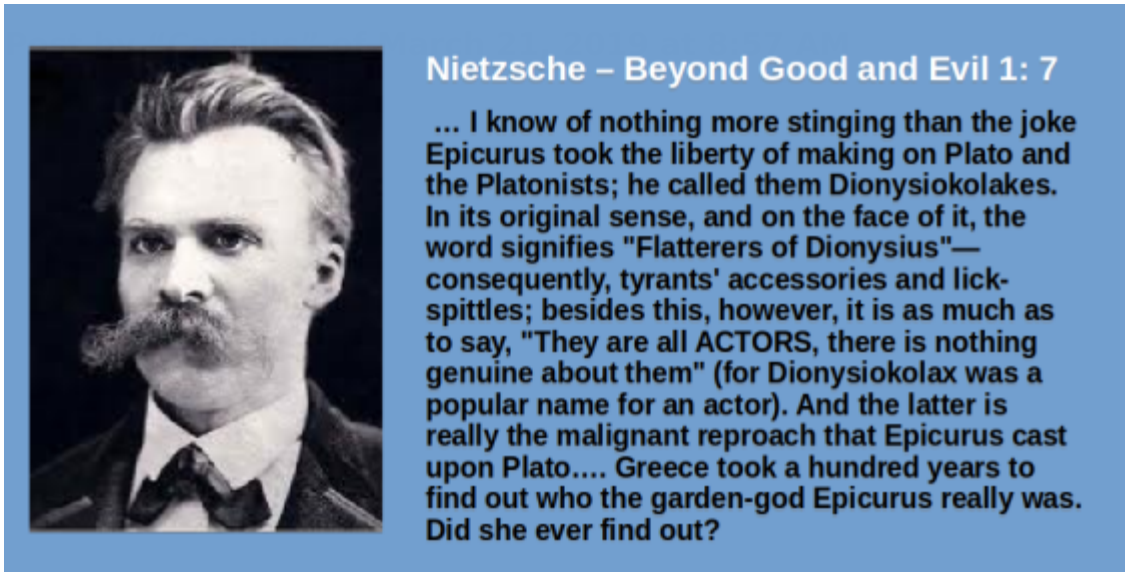
Collection of Nietzsche Quotes Relevant To Epicurean Philosophy



The collection at NewEpicurean.com is here.

I will work on expanding the list at the EpicureanFriends Wiki here.

To carry forward the point of the significance of Nietzsche just a little, here i think is the root of N's problem with Epicurus, in Antichrist Section 30:

"*The instinctive hatred of reality: the consequence of an extreme susceptibility to pain and irritation—so great that merely to be "touched" becomes unendurable, for every sensation is too profound.*

The instinctive exclusion of all aversion, all hostility, all bounds and distances in feeling: the consequence of an extreme susceptibility to pain and irritation—so great that it senses all resistance, all compulsion to resistance, as unbearable anguish (—that is to say, as harmful, as prohibited by the instinct of self-preservation), and regards blessedness (joy) as possible only when it is no longer necessary to offer resistance to anybody or anything, however evil or dangerous—love, as the only, as the ultimate possibility of life...

These are the two physiological realities upon and out of which the doctrine of salvation has sprung. I call them a sublime super-development of hedonism upon a thoroughly unsalubrious

soil. What stands most closely related to them, though with a large admixture of Greek vitality and nerve-force, is epicureanism, the theory of salvation of paganism. Epicurus was a typical decadent: I was the first to recognize him.—The fear of pain, even of infinitely slight pain—the end of this can be nothing save a religion of love… "

The last paragraph of course being the most clear. What I will suggest is that Nietzsche is simply incorrect as to his interpretation of Epicurus, and that Epicurus did NOT "fear pain, even infinitely slight pain." If this were true, I too would have nothing to do with Epicurus, but I do not think a fair reading of the texts establishes that it is true.

I can't say why Nietszche did not reach the same conclusions that Norman Dewitt did, but I admit that 95% of the people who learn about Epicurus in school or at Wikipedia are going to be taught that Nietzsche was right in his view, based on the "absence of pain" issue.

If you study the full texts for yourself, with a guide like Norman DeWitt instead of a neo-Stoic or an Academic, I think you'll the grounds for the argument that Nietzsche's assessment on this part of Epicurus is incorrect.

Post by “Cassius” of December 10, 2022 at 9:18 AM

AntiChrist

Translation by H.L. Mencken, 1918.

30:

“The instinctive hatred of reality: the consequence of an extreme susceptibility to pain and irritation—so great that merely to be “touched” becomes unendurable, for every sensation is too profound. The instinctive exclusion of all aversion, all hostility, all bounds and distances in feeling: the consequence of an extreme susceptibility to pain and irritation—so great that it senses all resistance, all compulsion to resistance, as unbearable anguish (—that is to say, as harmful, as prohibited by the instinct of self-preservation), and regards blessedness (joy) as possible only when it is no longer necessary to offer resistance to anybody or anything, however evil or dangerous—love, as the only, as the ultimate possibility of life… These are the two physiological realities upon and out of which the doctrine of salvation has sprung. I call them a sublime super-development of hedonism upon a thoroughly unsalubrious soil. What stands most closely related to them, though with a large admixture of Greek vitality and nerve-force, is epicureanism, the theory of salvation of paganism. Epicurus was a typical decadent: I was the first to recognize him.—The fear of pain, even of infinitely slight pain—the end of this

can be nothing save a religion of love… ”

58. But it [Roman civilization] was not strong enough to stand up against the corruptest of all forms of corruption—against Christians… These stealthy worms, which under the cover of night, mist and duplicity, crept upon every individual, sucking him dry of all earnest interest in real things, of all instinct for reality—this cowardly, effeminate and sugar-coated gang gradually alienated all “souls”, step by step, from that colossal edifice, turning against it all the meritorious, manly and noble natures that had found in the cause of Rome their own cause, their own serious purpose, their own pride. The sneakishness of hypocrisy, the secrecy of the conventicle, concepts as black as hell, such as the sacrifice of the innocent, the unio mystica in the drinking of blood, above all, the slowly rekindled fire of revenge, of Chandala revenge—all that sort of thing became master of Rome: the same kind of religion which, in a pre-existent form, Epicurus had combatted. One has but to read Lucretius to know what Epicurus made war upon—not paganism, but “Christianity”, which is to say, the corruption of souls by means of the concepts of guilt, punishment and immortality.—He combatted the subterranean cults, the whole of latent Christianity—to deny immortality was already a form of genuine salvation.—Epicurus had triumphed, and every respectable intellect in Rome was Epicurean—when Paul appeared… Paul, the Chandala hatred of Rome, of “the world”, in the flesh and inspired by genius—the Jew, the eternal Jew par excellence… What he saw was how, with the aid of the small sectarian Christian movement that stood apart from Judaism, a “world conflagration” might be kindled; how, with the symbol of “God on the cross”, all secret seditions, all the fruits of anarchistic intrigues in the empire, might be amalgamated into one immense power. “Salvation is of the Jews.”—Christianity is the formula for exceeding and summing up the subterranean cults of all varieties, that of Osiris, that of the GreatMother, that of Mithras, for instance: in his discernment of this fact the genius of Paul showed itself. His instinct was here so sure that, with reckless violence to the truth, he put the ideas which lent fascination to every sort of Chandala religion into the mouth of the “Saviour” as his own inventions, and not only into the mouth—he made out of him something that even a priest of Mithras could understand… This was his revelation at Damascus: he grasped the fact that he needed the belief in immortality in order to rob “the world” of its value, that the concept of “hell” would master Rome—that the notion of a “beyond” is the death of life. Nihilist and Christian: they rhyme in German, and they do more than rhyme.

42. Once more the priestly instinct of the Jew perpetrated the same old master crime against history—he simply struck out the yesterday and the day before yesterday of Christianity, and invented his own history of Christian beginnings. Going further, he treated the history of Israel to another falsification, so that it became a mere prologue to his achievement: all the prophets, it now appeared, had referred to his “Saviour”… Later on the church even falsified the history of man in order to make it a prologue to Christianity… The figure of the Saviour, his teaching, his way of life, his death, the meaning of his death, even the consequences of his death—nothing remained untouched, nothing remained in even remote contact with reality. Paul simply shifted the centre of gravity of that whole life to a place behind this existence—in

the lie of the “risen” Jesus. At bottom, he had no use for the life of the Saviour—what he needed was the death on the cross, and something more. To see anything honest in such aman as Paul, **whose home was at the centre of the Stoical enlightenment**, when he converts an hallucination into a proof of the resurrection of the Saviour, or even to believe his tale that he suffered from this hallucination himself—this would be a genuine niaiserie in a psychologist. Paul willed the end; therefore he also willed the means.—What he himself didn’t believe was swallowed readily enough by the idiots among whom he spread his teaching.—What he wanted was power; in Paul the priest once more reached out for power—he had use only for such concepts, teachings and symbols as served the purpose of tyrannizing over the masses and organizing mobs. What was the only part of Christianity that Mohammed borrowed later on? Paul’s invention, his device for establishing priestly tyranny and organizing the mob: the belief in the immortality of the soul—that is to say, the doctrine of “judgment.”

Beyond Good And Evil

(Gutenberg edition, translated by Helen Zimmern) Chapter 1, section 9

You desire to LIVE “according to Nature”? Oh, you noble Stoics, what fraud of words! Imagine to yourselves a being like Nature, boundlessly extravagant, boundlessly indifferent, without purpose or consideration, without pity or justice, at once fruitful and barren and uncertain: imagine to yourselves INDIFFERENCE as a power—how COULD you live in accordance with such indifference? To live—is not that just endeavouring to be otherwise than this Nature? Is not living valuing, preferring, being unjust, being limited, endeavouring to be different? And granted that your imperative, “living according to Nature,” means actually the same as “living according to life”—how could you do DIFFERENTLY? Why should you make a principle out of what you yourselves are, and must be? In reality, however, it is quite otherwise with you: while you pretend to read with rapture the canon of your law in Nature, you want something quite the contrary, you extraordinary stage-players and self-deluders! In your pride you wish to dictate your morals and ideals to Nature, to Nature herself, and to incorporate them therein; you insist that it shall be Nature “according to the Stoa,” and would like everything to be made after your own image, as a vast, eternal glorification and generalism of Stoicism! With all your love for truth, you have forced yourselves so long, so persistently, and with such hypnotic rigidity to see Nature FALSELY, that is to say, Stoically, that you are no longer able to see it otherwise—and to crown all, some unfathomable superciliousness gives you the Bedlamite hope that BECAUSE you are able to tyrannize over yourselves—Stoicism is self-tyranny—Nature will also allow herself to be tyrannized over: is not the Stoic a PART of Nature?... But this is an old and everlasting story: what happened in old times with the Stoics still happens today, as soon as ever a philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates the world in its own image; it cannot do otherwise; philosophy is this tyrannical impulse itself, the most spiritual Will to Power, the will to “creation of the world,” the will to the causa prima.

Beyond Good And Evil, (Gutenberg edition, translated by Helen Zimmern) Chapter 5, section 188

In contrast to laisser-aller, every system of morals is a sort of tyranny against “nature” and also against “reason”, that is, however, no objection, unless one should again decree by some system of morals, that all kinds of tyranny and unreasonableness are unlawful What is essential and invaluable in every system of morals, is that it is a long constraint. In order to understand Stoicism, or Port Royal, or Puritanism, one should remember the constraint under which every language has attained to strength and freedom—the metrical constraint, the tyranny of rhyme and rhythm.

Beyond Good And Evil, (Gutenberg edition, translated by Helen Zimmern) Chapter 5, section 198

All the systems of morals which address themselves with a view to their “happiness,” as it is called—what else are they but suggestions for behaviour adapted to the degree of DANGER from themselves in which the individuals live; recipes for their passions, their good and bad propensities, insofar as such have the Will to Power and would like to play the master; small and great expediencies and elaborations, permeated with the musty odour of old family medicines and old-wife wisdom; all of them grotesque and absurd in their form—because they address themselves to “all,” because they generalize where generalization is not authorized; all of them speaking unconditionally, and taking themselves unconditionally; all of them flavoured not merely with one grain of salt, but rather endurable only, and sometimes even seductive, when they are over-spiced and begin to smell dangerously, especially of “the other world.” That is all of little value when estimated intellectually, and is far from being “science,” much less “wisdom”; but, repeated once more, and three times repeated, it is expediency, expediency, expediency, mixed with stupidity, stupidity, stupidity—whether it be the indifference and statuesque coldness towards the heated folly of the emotions, which the Stoics advised and fostered; or the no-more-laughing and no-more-weeping of Spinoza, the destruction of the emotions by their analysis and vivisection, which he recommended so naively; or the lowering of the emotions to an innocent mean at which they may be satisfied, the Aristotelianism of morals; or even morality as the enjoyment of the emotions in a voluntary attenuation and spiritualization by the symbolism of art, perhaps as music, or as love of God, and of mankind for God’s sake—for in religion the passions are once more enfranchised, provided that…; or, finally, even the complaisant and wanton surrender to the emotions, as has been taught by Hafis and Goethe, the bold letting-go of the reins, the spiritual and corporeal licentia morum in the exceptional cases of wise old codgers and drunkards, with whom it “no longer has much danger.”—This also for the chapter: “Morals as Timidity.”

Additional Cites From The Collection At The Epicurus Wiki

One of the greatest men, inventor of an heroic-idyllic way to philosophize: Epicurus [Human, All Too Human § 295].

The «after-death» doesn't matter to us at all! […] Again prevails Epicurus! [Sunrise § 72/34]. Yea! I'm proud to enjoy what […] I hear and read in Epicurus, the Mediterranean joy of antiquity. […] The wisdom had taken some steps forward with Epicurus, but then it went many thousand steps backward [The Joyous Science § 45].

Epicurus would have won; each respectable mind was Epicurean in the Roman Empire: and it's done! Then Paul arrives on the scene… [The Antichrist § 58].

The reawakened sciences have been reunited point by point with Epicurus' philosophy, while they have escaped point by point Christianity. [Human, All Too Human § 68].

Why we seem Epicurean. We modern-day men proceed warily with farthest beliefs […] a cognitive approach we would define Epicurean, which doesn't wish to escape from many-sided appearance of things; […] a dislike for big words and moral poses [The Cheerful Science § 375].

The Epicurean man uses his higher learning to make himself independent from dominant opinions; he overlooks on these, while the Cynic confines himself to their denial. The former walks so to speak by the side of windless paths, in well-sheltered places, in the half-light, while over him, in the wind, the tops of the trees rustle and show him how much the world out there is worked up [Human, All Too Human § 275].

That's the ataraxia state Epicurus extolled as the end-goal and gods' condition; to be, at that moment, free from bad urge of wish […] [Moral's Genealogy. § 6].

"A little garden, some figs, a piece of cheese, plus three or four good friends – that was the sum of Epicurus' luxuriousness [Human, All Too Human, II, part 2, § 192].

Stoic and Epicurean. […] The one who envisage that the external necessity enables oneself to 'spin out a long thread' acts well to arrange for an Epicurean way of life; all men fond of intellectual work have done so! Sure enough it would be for them the worst loss the one of ruining their subtle feeling and getting the skin of the Stoics in return, with all the quills of a sea urchin [The Cheerful Science § 306].

Four are the pairs which, for me the follower, did not turn out alien: Epicurus and Montaigne, Goethe and Spinoza, Plato and Rousseau, Pascal and Schopenhauer. With them I must debate, when I have wandered alone for a long time, by them I want to be approved and amended […] [Human, All too Human, II 408, The Journey in Hades].

Is there any more dangerous seduction that might tempt one to renounce one's faith in the gods of Epicurus who have no care and are unknown, and to believe instead in some petty deity who is full of care and personally knows every little hair on our head and finds nothing nauseous in the most miserable small service? [The Gay Science § 2771].

The following are not explicit references to Epicurus, but highly consistent with the Epicurean perspective:

Thus Spake Zarathustra, Walter Kaufman translation

“I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoned themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go. Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth…”

Post by “Cassius” of March 26, 2023 at 3:18 PM

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Morality and success. – It is not only the spectators of an act who usually assess its morality or immorality according to whether or not it is successful: no, the performer himself does so. For the motives and intentions behind it are seldom sufficiently clear and simple, and sometimes even the memory seems to be muddled by the success of an act, so that one foists false motives upon one's act oneself, or treats inessential motives as essential. Success often bestows upon an act the whole honest lustre of the good conscience, a failure casts the shadow of pangs of conscience over the most estimable deed. From this there follows the familiar practice of the politician, who thinks: 'only give me success: if I have success I shall also have brought every honest soul over to my side – and made myself honest in my own eyes too'. – In a similar way, success is supposed to be a substitute for greater validity. Even today many educated people think that the victory of Christianity over Greek philosophy is a proof of the superior truth of the former – although in this case it was only the coarser and more violent that conquered the more spiritual and delicate. So far as superior truth is concerned, it is enough to observe that the awakening sciences have allied themselves point by point with the philosophy of Epicurus but point by point rejected Christianity.†