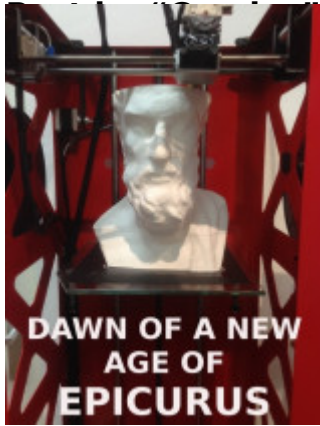


On Ice Cream And Epicurean Philosophy



of May 14, 2019 at 4:34 PM

We have recently been discussing the challenges that people run into in writing about Epicurean philosophy. Here's another aspect I think is worth pointing out:

Many people, especially those who just find out about Epicurus, seem to have the impression that the brilliance of Epicurus is summarized in the observation "Don't eat too much ice cream or you'll get sick."

It amazes me how many people seems to think that Epicurus was needed to come along and make this point. They seem to think that prior to Epicurus no one had corrected the Stoics for drowning their pain in too much alcohol, or the Platonists for having too much sex with their shared wives, or the Aristotelians for stressing out over their political organizing, or the Pythagoreans for placing too much reliance on their magic numbers. Apparently many modern philosophers want us to believe that it was a novel and blindingly impressive idea to observe that "focusing on the basics" is an effective way to increase happiness and reduce stress.

"Thank goodness Epicurus came along to show us that eating too much ice cream makes us sick!!" seems to be the attitude of these people. And so people who follow their lead endlessly repeat the same superficial points about Epicurus over and over - points that as Cicero's Torquatus truly observed, we "ought to be ashamed that we did not learn as children."

We have people reading my post here from all over the world, and for some of them English is not their first language, so let me be clear:

I am being totally sarcastic! If we were to picture Epicurus here today, seeing what people consider to be his most important teachings, no doubt the pose he would assume would be the classic "face-palm" -- he would be shocked and amazed to see how the world had trivialized his philosophy.

My point here is that when we think about talking to other people about Epicurus, don't start and stop with non-controversial points like the "natural and necessary" categories. Not only was this not one of Epicurus' primary conclusions, if you were listing his major doctrines in order you would have to go over TWENTY-SEVEN OTHER MORE IMPORTANT POINTS before heard any mention of "natural and necessary."

The problem with Stoicism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Pythagoreanism, and other philosophies is not that they don't understand that eating too much ice cream makes you sick. The problems with those philosophies are much more profound, and the insights of Epicurus in defeating them are much too important, to get stuck on points that are obvious even to children.

So I suggest you ask yourself: (1) "Why does the modern world praise Epicurus to the skies for a point that any child learns quickly by personal experience?" and (2) "Why does the modern world ignore and disparage the major points that made Epicurus famous in the ancient world?"

The answer isn't hard to find, and it's not because the modern world is filled with people who have a problem eating too much ice cream. So let's move past the basic and obvious points, and discuss the points that about Epicurus that much of the world wants to suppress.

Post by "Cassius" of May 14, 2019 at 5:28 PM

Ha I just remembered that Michele just recently posted this, and it's right in line with my text. My point is NOT to be critical of this, but to go further -- as Michele is a perfect example of doing, with his detailed and excellent blog, and his other work in progress! 😊



Post by “michelepinto” of May 15, 2019 at 3:00 AM

I state: I love ice cream and eat absurd quantities ... 😊

I believe that the message of balance of Epicurus is very important. I said balance, not abstinence, pauperism or the like. And I think it's very important because it's what the world is

struggling to accept.

We all see it all the days, it seems that everyone tells us earn as much money as you can and spend them all on useless things. The voice of Epicurus is out of this chorus and is therefore appreciated. Perhaps this message is trivial, but we cannot take it for granted. Indeed, perhaps it is precisely on this that we can aim to make Epicuro known at the beginning.

Why is the rest of Epicurus's message more or less ignored? I do not know. I wouldn't worry about it, rather we keep talking about it here.

Finally, the vignette ... I didn't do it for informative purposes, but to make the already navigated Epicureans have a few laughs. I think irony is important in Epicurean life.

Post by “michelepinto” of May 15, 2019 at 3:05 AM

I forgot:

Ilaria Gaspari wrote a book about Greek philosophy. For six weeks she lived following a different school. The 5th week was the epicurean one. And she at start appreciates Epicurus teaching about desires, then she discovered it is not enough for happiness and went further.

Ilaria will be at Epicurean Festival in Senigallia this summer. 😊
And this is my article about her book: <http://epicuro.org/una-settimana-epicurea/> I'll translate it for you soon.

Post by “Cassius” of May 15, 2019 at 5:08 AM

[Quote from michelepinto](#)

And she at start appreciates Epicurus teaching about desires, then she discovered it is not enough for happiness and went further.

Yes, that seems very close to the point I was trying to make, so I would be very interested in reading the translation.

[Quote from michelepinto](#)

We all see it all the days, it seems that everyone tells us earn as much money as you can and spend them all on useless things. The voice of Epicurus is out of this chorus and is therefore appreciated.

That is of course true, and I am glad that people get that message. But again, it makes me mad that this is the point at which a lot of people stop their study of Epicurus. To be blunt again, this ought to be shockingly obvious, and it should not take the brilliance of an Epicurus to understand this. It is a testament to the sorry state of modern civilization that so many people do not understand even this basic point.

But in addition to this "basic" point, there is a universe of additional truth inherent in atomism, and the infinite eternal universe, and the non-existence of supernatural gods, and the true understanding of pleasure and pain, and the role of the senses vs. "logic" -- etc etc etc. Those are the areas where Epicurus' brilliance really shines, and I think he would be far more proud of his work in those areas than in his "natural and necessary" desire classification.

So I think he would be shocked to hear on what we focus, and he would ask "You need ME to explain THAT to you?" 😊

Post by “michelepinto” of May 15, 2019 at 6:44 AM

Here the translation of:

<http://epicuro.org/una-settimana-epicurea/>

An epicurean week

In the book "Lezioni di felicità" (Lessons of Happiness) Ilaria Gaspari tells firsthand how to rebuild her life thanks to classical philosophy.

The protagonist of the story has just been left by the partner with whom she had lived for a long time. Unfortunately the rent of their apartment, now that she is alone, is too expensive and she is forced to move. A double blow leaves her on her knees. To start again, a week at a time, the protagonist will follow the teachings of a different Greek philosophical school. Including Epicureanism.

This book has the indisputable merit of presenting the thought of Pythagoras, Parmenides, Zeno, Pirrone, Epicurus and Diogenes as a living thought and not as a distant object of study covered by the dust of centuries.

In this Epicurus is distinctly distinguished from other philosophers. The protagonist does not need to interpret and adapt Epicurean's advice for a happy life, as it is necessary to do for all the other schools. It is no coincidence that the book opens with a quotation from Epicurus: "The discourse of that philosopher who does not cure any evil of the human soul is in vain."

Ilaria Gaspari's interpretation of Epicurus is lucid and fascinating.

"Epicurus is one of those philosophers whose ideas have been so free, so different from those of all their contemporaries - and therefore so foolish, with less outdated eyes - that they give him the reputation of being depraved, vicious, disheartened or whatever you want. "

At first the protagonist focuses on the teaching of Epicurus regarding desires: natural and necessary, natural but not necessary and unnecessary. *"The fact is that we are not used to cultivating moderation: I realize, with a certain surprise, when unexpectedly my epicurean life turns into a long chase of frugality."* And also: *"I want to decide what I want, and also what I don't want. The problem, however, is that this activity ends up absorbing all my time, it's a spiral from which it seems impossible to get out. "*

But then, understanding the message of Epicurus better, he finds serenity again: *"I understand that being a good Epicurean does not mean either being dissolute or monastic in the severity towards myself, but letting myself live with subtle fatalism, without falling prey to anguish."* Center! Despite the term fatalism I do not think it is particularly suitable, because for Epicurus the contingencies of fate have a very limited power over our happiness.

Finally the author underlines the importance that friendship and generosity have for Epicurean happiness.

However brief, only one chapter of the book is dedicated to Epicurus, the epicurean experience of Ilaria Gaspari is decidedly effective and original. And if the author prefers to learn happiness from dogs rather than *"compete in happiness with Zeus himself"* well, everyone makes their choices.

Post by "Cassius" of May 15, 2019 at 8:35 AM

Thank you Michele! As you say:

[Quote from michelepinto](#)

"I understand that being a good Epicurean does not mean either being dissolute or monastic in the severity towards myself, but letting myself live with subtle fatalism, without falling prey to anguish."

OH NO! "subtle fatalism"!!!!!! As you say Michele, not the right words at all!

Perhaps this person should have started out by questioning her premise of whether it is a good idea to simply give each philosopher a week at a time. Those were a lot of wasted weeks until she got to Epicurus! 😊

Michele that reminds me -- have you read Lucian's "[HERMOTIMUS](#)" which has parallels to this (the question of how to choose among philosophers)?

It is one of my favorite Lucian essays, and a favorite of [Elli](#) as well!



Post by “michelepinto” of May 15, 2019 at 10:44 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Perhaps this person should have started out by questioning her premise of whether it is a good idea to simply give each philosopher a week at a time. Those were a lot of wasted weeks until she got to Epicurus! 😊

Exactly! She will be at Epicurean festival this summer! 😊

I just founded Hermotimus in Italian and I'll read it.

<http://www.filosofico.net/lucianoermotimo.htm>

Post by “Cassius” of May 15, 2019 at 11:40 AM

It is good thing that envy is not singled out as a sin in Epicurean philosophy, because I envy you guys being in Italy with such close at hand access to so much opportunity to study Epicurean material! 😊

Post by “michelepinto” of May 15, 2019 at 11:51 AM

I'll write an article about the difference between American and Italian Epicureans. It will be fun.

Post by “Cassius” of May 15, 2019 at 1:04 PM

Yes that would be great. Maybe you could include a part on GREEK Epicureans too!? 😊

Post by “Elli” of May 16, 2019 at 1:53 AM

The greek epicureans and specially those in the Garden of Thessaloniki insist on the methodology (see the scheme in the attached picture)...

Let's see the picture :

It concerns the Epicurean philosophy.

The more the person is concerned with the study of nature,

the more he succeeds fearlessness,

the more he uses the measurement of pain and pleasure.

These two produce pleasure that belongs to the individual, (because pleasure belongs to the one who feels it, of course).

At the same time, however, the person practices the art of sufficiency

which is improved with the study of nature

and the more one achieves self-sufficiency,

the more freedom he acquires and thus greater the pleasure it provides to the individual.

Let's not insist on completeness of the analysis (which anyway does not exist), but in the method.

It includes the general picture. We can later move to the rest which are the multiple causes of human happiness. We can combine the rest. Then, we are going to see what emerges from the composition of the rest. In a more compound form we will observe the rebound and feedback. The more this process provides pleasure to a person, the greater the desire to study the Nature. The system does not use the law of excluded middle, i.e. pleasure or no pleasure, fearlessness or not fearlessness etc, but uses the Epicurean Multi-valued way where the above causes constantly get different values depending on the decisions and our actions. Imagine, for example, that I give great importance to the fearlessness and succeed pleasure from there, but I give little importance to self-sufficiency. So, depending on the general activity at a certain time, one cause will affect the other continuously taking different values and all the separate data will pulsate and will affect one another until the system settles and ****perhaps**** I wish that calmness means Katastematic pleasure of the individual. The system is dynamic, it is evolving like the nature and covers the needs of the Epicurean philosophy, which observes things as they proceed and as Diogenes of Oenoanda writes (in response to Peripatetics) this flow, flowing as he says, can be scrolled quickly but not so fast as not to conceive a situation of it.

Post by "Elli" of May 16, 2019 at 2:43 AM

Imagine, for example, that I give great importance to the algorithm of the desires and succeed pleasure from there, but I give a little importance to the study of Nature. What would be the results?

My cup of life would have holes to permit the entrance of PAIN. Because without the study of Nature the notions that : "a god created the universe" (platonists-stoics-christians) or "the best to promote is the contemplation of god" (Aristotelians-stoics-christians) or "fate and necessity is the endless chain of causation" (platonists-stoics-christians) or "virtue is above all"(platonists-

stoics-christians), or "do your duty subordinate, compromised and in apathy" (stoics-christians) or "there is another life after death" (platonists -christians)... while I count the algorithm on the desires, some devious others will do their filthy job in my society, and I will be the responsible to lose and even my natural and necessary. So, while I give great importance on the algorithm of the desires - without studying Nature properly - all of my desires will lose their fixed bond and main core that is pleasure to disappear for making me a good stoic-slave or worse a good buddhist for searching the Nirvana.

And as our epicurean friend George Kaplanis from the Garden in Thesalloniki says: "Epicurean philosophy protects itself with consistency. This is its self-defense. If someone tries to change one piece with another piece from elsewhere, it will end up in nothing. If not something worse than nothing".

"I think every explanation without the core that exist in "Lathe Viosas" it is something just to talk about. Everything in the epicurean philosophy has a fixed bond with pleasure. Lathe Viosas serves the pleasure, and it has the pleasure in its foundation, i.e. inside its core. If you follow the "Lathe Viosas" and you end up compromised and subordinate, then the pleasure is lost and "Lathe Viosas" loses its core and disappears".

Post by "Elli" of May 16, 2019 at 3:13 AM

Meanwhile nobody thinks that the algorithm on the desires is synonym with the <<self-sufficiency>>, and nobody thinks that << self-sufficiency>> is synonym with <<freedom>>, and nobody thinks that <<freedom>> is synonym with <<bravery>>, and nobody thinks that <<bravery>> means also <<generosity>> i.e. the art of offering to and taking from the likes in my society. Nobody thinks that the art to offer and taking is synonym with the <<common benefit>> and nobody thinks that the <<common benefit>> makes us <<autonomous>> and nobody thinks that <<autonomy>> means to establish new social contracts if the old ones have such laws that harming us.

Study of Nature <==>self-sufficiency<==>freedom<==>bravery<==>common benefit<==>autonomy<==>social contracts with fair laws<==> PLEASURE for ALL.

If the above have not all these bases for any enlightenment that lead to political actions for making the people living in pleasure and happiness...I wonder, what else could be ? 👍

Post by "Elli" of May 16, 2019 at 3:45 AM

An example and the evidence : IF THE MAJORITY of the Greeks won't be christians all the traitors will be tarred and feathered in the middle of the square of Syntagma (syntagma means constitution). Christians do not defend any constitution, and are incapable to establish a new one. Because and this old constitution we already have, it starts and has strong bond with "the name of the holy trinity". So, the majority of greeks are waiting in anesthesia and apathy their death, since they believe they will live in happiness to another life after death. 😊



Post by "Elli" of May 16, 2019 at 4:37 AM

The same as above are going to the Italians. Popes and catholicism is the main core in their life. Italians are sleeping and waking with the same obsession of a dream...waiting their death in anesthesia and apathy for another life after death. Italians do not take any clue what the popes and cardinals are doing inside the Vatican or elsewhere in the world. Italians did not get angry and even when they hear that there is sexual abuse by catholic cardinals to the little children. Any society that does not defend its little children i.e. the great hope of our future, is a society of a great decadence. Italians prefer to count the algorithm on the desires and in the same time, they do not defend any little children, they do not defend their constitution or the worse are incapable to establish a new one. And me, I am waiting that the religion will born again the ideology of fascism of Mussolini that will collaborate with the new fascist Hitler. The fascist Hitler will conquer again the poor Mussolini. And both of them will lead the Europe...and the whole world to a WWII and disasters. What will be again the result ? A great PAIN. So, the majority of Italians, and greeks do not chose a pain here and now, that is the defend of the little children, and their constitution with such laws for the purpose to lead them to a greater pleasure...they chose the apathy, the indifference and the anesthesia. So, the italians and the greeks put out their eyes with their own hands. What a great "pleasure" is to put out your eyes

with your own hands...because VIRTUE is above all. Which Virtue of popes, cardinals and patriarchs that collaborate with the traitors politicians ? Give me a break !!

Post by "Elli" of May 16, 2019 at 6:34 AM

(Thrice and with capital letters) WARNING : THE VIRUS IS INSIDE OUR SOCIETIES...THE VIRUS IS INSIDE OUR SOCIETIES...THE VIRUS IS INSIDE OUR SOCIETIES...There is the danger of that virus to lead our societies to collapse again from the plague/cancer that are the religions<==> ideologies...and that is because we the doctors i.e. the epicureans did not manage yet to bombard with healthy cells that disgusting VIRUS. Thus, this VIRUS is capable in any time and in any place to inflict with illnesses any healthy body that exist in our societies. Where are those capable doctors-epicureans for spreading the health around ? Where are they ? What do you do not understand ?!

P.S.1. I have an impression that these doctors-epicureans are inside the society of France . My only hope comes from French people that have among them and a Michel Onfray who established and his "popular University" that gives birth to the "yellow jackets"of our days. For me the French are the bravest people in EU that can bombard with healthy cells that disgusting virus. French are the great enlighteners that take actions and in practice... neither italians nor greeks nor germans nor english nor even Americans will start what is going to be here and after. English and Americans have a strange bond that is based on their common same language. A strange relationship of "hate and love" in the same time that does not permit them to see clearly the general picture. English speaking persons are incapable for the time being to change any situation that hurts and theirs and us in our western societies.

Please keep your patience for seeing the second French revolution that will be different from that in 1789, because people have learned to measure differently. France and french people are my great hope for leading our children to healthier societies... and then do not be amazed when the greeks will follow in that revolution, and then do not be amazed that Americans will follow, and then do not be amazed that Russians will put their final signature. In the end that virus will collapse and will not exist anymore. And this probability in the picture, that comes by Diogenis of Oinoanda will be a REAL FACT ! It would be that time when we, the homo-sapiens will evolve to homo-deus. Someone would say that I speak like an idealist...No, I am not an idealist...I am a probabilitist, I count with the usage of the manifold way of the epicurean Canon. The establishment of a new religion will be the human beings themselves. The homo-deus will know the art to live like a god among gods, and not men.

And then, neither French, English, Americans, Russians, Greeks do not exist with these national names anymore... They will exist as home-deus. Who will be the philosopher that will put his

final signature ? Nietzsche of course, that his philosophy is based on 90 % to our teacher Epicurus ! The real Nietzsche and Epicurus and not the misunderstood will put their final signature ... These two and both of them are the sperm to born the homo-deus and the overman !

"I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?

All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment...

Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman *shall be* the meaning of the earth! 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...

What is the greatest experience you can have? It is the hour of the great contempt. The hour when your happiness, too, arouses your disgust, and even your reason and your virtue.

The hour when you say, 'What matters my happiness? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment. But my happiness ought to justify existence itself.'

The hour when you say, 'What matters my reason? Does it crave knowledge as the lion his food? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment.'

The hour when you say, 'What matters my virtue? As yet it has not made me rage. How weary I am of my good and my evil! All that is poverty and filth and wretched contentment.'

"Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman--a rope over an abyss...

What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an *overture* and a *going under*...

"I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves.

Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*.

'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the last man, and blinks.

The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea; the last man lives longest.

'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions

where it was hard to live, for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth...

One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one is careful lest the entertainment be too harrowing. One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion. Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion.

No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.

'Formerly, all the world was mad,' say the most refined, and they blink...

One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night: but one has a regard for health.

'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink."

from Nietzsche's *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, p.3,4,5, Walter Kaufmann transl.

PS. 2 Someone would say that Nietzsche was a German. Yes, Germans are the people that are able to measure differently and properly now, and will be very proud that gave birth to a Nietzsche !

Best regards

Elli XXX

Post by “michelepinto” of May 16, 2019 at 10:34 AM

I Like it [Elli](#)

Post by “Elli” of May 16, 2019 at 1:12 PM

Respiro e spero, mio caro amico [michelepinto](#) . Ti prego anche tu metti la tua forza per impartisci correttamente la filosofia epicurea. Siamo in un periodo di gestazione dove il nuovo non ha ancora nata. 😊

Post by “Elli” of May 17, 2019 at 10:45 AM

Writing in Italian to Michele, I remembered a movie of 1963 that is entitled in Italian "Il Gattopardo", in English is "The Leopard", by director Luchino Visconti, based on Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's novel of the same title.

If there is a case for [Cassius](#) to watch that movie or if he is already watched it, I would like to have his opinion and comments, and especially if he finds that the protagonist Burt Lancaster is an epicurean personality or not. 😊

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06f7f24lpUI&list=PL4_yD-qVB1HUHtYKldNLMrNS16qKrWjNd&index=1

Post by "Cassius" of May 17, 2019 at 5:29 PM

Elli I immediately recognize Burt Lancaster but I don't think I have ever heard of that movie, or even know what historical setting it is in. I will look this up and investigate!

Post by "michelepinto" of May 19, 2019 at 3:53 PM

I read "Il Gattopardo" di Tomasi di Lampedusa, but I did not find anything of Epicurean in it.

It is a very important book for Italian culture.

The protagonist is a nobleman who, before the mission of Garibaldi's 1000, supported the Borbone king, after the Savoia king.

The most famous phrase, continually quoted in Italy is "Change everything because everything remains as it is". The king changes, but the privileges of the aristocracy remain unchanged. There is a reform, but politicians continue to steal ...