

Epicurean Worldview, Personal Identity, and Creating Community

Post by "Don" of January 20, 2022 at 7:57 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Don is very much with us that a life of total contemplation might or might not be hypothetically the one some of us would choose, but as with the Bliss machine hypotheticals, is not practical for most any of us.

I'm with you, but... 😊

A life of "total contemplation" sounds Aristotelian in his promotion of wisdom and "philosophy" as the highest good. That's not what Epicurus was advocating. Epicurus was not a navel-gazer nor did he advocate removal from all distractions in a cave (to use [Cassius](#)'s favorite metaphor).

That being said, Epicurus's insistence that we strive for the "health of the body and tranquility of the mind" has led me to understand he was including a calm mind in his definition of what it means to lead a pleasurable life. In looking at various sources, ancient and modern, I think Epicurus was specifically including that "intermediate state," described by the Cyrenaics, "in which we feel neither pain nor pleasure, which is similar to a calm" as a pleasure and that it is, in fact, that state which is the natural, biological homeostasis in the body.

Approaching life with a calm, tranquil mind makes us much better equipped to make choices and rejections for what will lead to a pleasurable life. A calm and tranquil mind is a base of operations from which to encounter the "slings and arrows" of our daily existence. It's not living numb in the world. It's like a lens through which to clearly encounter and evaluate what needs to be done. If our minds are disturbed, troubled, turbulent, it's like driving through our lives with a dirty windshield in a snowstorm. There is nothing wrong or improper about trying to have a tranquil mind. I think it can allow us to experience life more fully, more pleurably. That's my summary take on this tranquility discussion.