

Article by Voorhoeve: Epicurus on Pleasure, A Complete Life, and Death: A Defense

Post by "Cassius" of March 4, 2022 at 9:29 AM

Yep, he's a Tranquillist, and suggests that the best way to live a pleasurable life is to give up pleasure!). Not

What would a person's outlook and situation have to be to make this belief in their near-invulnerability justifiable? For Epicurus, a key source of vulnerability lies in our desires: the thwarting of an important, strongly held desire will be perceived as an evil, and the thought that such a desire is sufficiently likely to be thwarted will cause us distress.² But we can, he proposes, greatly limit the likelihood of this perceived evil by limiting our desires and eliminating those false beliefs which cause us distress (see the excerpts from *KD* and *Vatican Sayings* [VS] in Long and Sedley 1987, pp. 115–16, 150; *Fragments* [F] 74 in Epicurus 1993, p. 100; and Nussbaum 1994, pp. 104–5).

Hard to state Tranquillism more clearly than this (near 2 of the article)

In sum, a key element of Epicurus' strategy for acquiring a justified belief in one's near-invulnerability is to confine one's wants to natural and necessary desires and those among the natural and unnecessary desires that, given one's circumstances, have a high chance of not being frustrated.

So he (the writer) and Nussbaum, even though both are into tranquility and the natural and necessary division, cannot even agree among themselves as to what "empty" means. More evidence (to me) that the word "empty" is clear mainly in describing the usefulness of the empty analysis itself (for which I do not blame Epicurus, but these writers who think this word makes sense without more clear explanation of what is being discussed).

³ Nussbaum's (1994, p. 111) understanding of the categories of 'natural' and 'empty' is that they are mutually exclusive, because the latter are based on false belief or corrupted acculturation, while the former are based on neither of these. But this interpretation conflicts with Epicurus' claim that a natural and unnecessary desire *may also be empty because based on false belief*, if it is held too passionately: 'Whenever intense passion is present in natural desires which do not lead to pain if they are unfulfilled, these have their origin in empty opinion' (KD 30, in Long and Sedley 1987, p. 115). I therefore propose that these categories are not mutually exclusive. Rather, I assume that for a desire to be 'empty', it must involve false belief or corrupted acculturation, whereas a natural desire need not be—but *may* be—based on either of these. So, for example, one's desire for finery is natural and unnecessary because one can desire such clothing, without false belief, as merely a lovely way of being clothed. But one can also have this desire out of the opinion that it simply will not do to be seen in anything other than 'the best' or 'the latest fashion' (which, in Epicurus' view, would be a false belief, so that the desire would then be natural, unnecessary and empty).