

## Article by Voorhoeve: Epicurus on Pleasure, A

tus to see one's death as an evil and little cause for anxiety about it.

Combining these ideas with Epicurus' aforementioned categorization of desires into natural and necessary, natural and unnecessary, and empty, one can say that the Epicurean strategy for becoming free from anxiety about the possible frustration of one's important desires has two prongs.

The first prong is carefully crafting and pruning one's desires, in part through the process of ridding oneself of false beliefs about the universe and the good life. This involves limiting one's desires to the natural and necessary ones, along with a circumscribed set of natural and unnecessary desires. Moreover, it involves shaping one's future-oriented, natural desires so that one's continued existence does not contribute substantially to their not being thwarted.

The second prong is to arrange one's circumstances so that one's remaining desires are unlikely to be frustrated. Epicurus believed that under moderately fortunate social and economic circumstances (a society with a substantial degree of stability, rule of law, respect for basic rights over one's body and mind, as well as a basic level of economic development), one can achieve justified confidence in the satisfaction of one's properly limited desires (*LM* 130, in Long and Sedley 1987, p. 114). Practically speaking, for Epicurus, this involved partial social withdrawal by avoiding engagement in politics and by moving to the edge of town to live simply and securely in the company of fellow Epicureans.

Epicurus believed that pursuing the outlined two-pronged strategy would establish the practically necessary and sufficient conditions for freedom from pain and anxiety. In this paper, I shall grant this

And if you accept the view that "freedom from pain and anxiety" was Epicurus' view of how to live life, then indeed you'll spend your time limiting your desires and withdrawing from society.

On the other hand what Epicurus did was pursue his desire for pleasure and happiness through the study of nature and the spreadings of his philosophy through constant controversy against other schools, and to live out his life pleasurably among many friends (with courtesans and

slaves and multiple houses and apparent material well-being) close to the very center of an Athens that was filled with people who despised his philosophy.

So I think Epicurus would reject this author's characterizations of what Epicurus taught, and I think "we" should too. Which doesn't mean there's not a lot to learn from this article, because by talking about it we get a better focus on the issues.