

Episode 195 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 05

Post by "Cassius" of October 11, 2023 at 3:46 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Yours actually adds new content. I'm not quite sure what you're getting at with "and you should not want them to or try to make them." Is that commentary directed at those who elevate tranquility?

Not necessarily taking aim at tranquility at this point, just trying to focus on whether it might be important to get a better fix on "variety." Is "variety" in pleasure the reason we find it is desirable to get out of bed tomorrow? Or is the reason just that we didn't succeed in making "pure pleasure" today so that we try again tomorrow?

There's something going on that explains better why we both (1) don't need infinite time, and yet (2) find it desirable to live another day tomorrow. Yes "life is desirable" is a statement that we can refer to, but there's also some intellectual connection between why pure pleasure (should we attain it) cannot be improved, and yet we do want to live again tomorrow if there is more pleasure and pain that comes from it.

There needs to be a simple way to state the reason other than "Epicurus said life is desirable."

Here's two things I think are pretty simple once you get with the terminology issue:

(1) It's pretty simple to see that when you talk about the whole organism (and I think that probably includes time as a component, but maybe not) being "full" of pleasure / without any pain / experiencing pure pleasure" is a height which cannot be exceeded no matter how much additional time is added.

(2) And it's pretty easy to understand that if there are only two labels for feelings, then any particular feeling could be called either "pleasure" or "absence of pain" if it feels good, or "pain" or "absence of pleasure" if it feels bad.

I would think there must be an equally simple way of dealing with a question such as: "If your view of the goal is (1), and you reach it one day, why do you want to live another day?"

It's one thing to say that (1) is the "ideal" and we just do the best we can to approximate it every day, and not worry about it further. That may be the complete answer, and we think of (1) as something the gods can attain but we cannot, because what we can attain is a preponderance of pleasure over pain all the time.

But lots of people seem to ask what Epicurus says about "How long should you want to live?" combined with "Why not settle for the least active life you can so as to minimize pain?" and it would be desirable to answer that as clearly and concisely as possible.

Perhaps some of the Gosling and Taylor commentary about "living the sort of life specific to the being in question" helps in that direction. But whether it does or not it's a question you'll be asked as soon as you start taking questions from your local Epicurean Meetup Group so it's good to plan ahead. 😊