

Is All "Ataraxia" Equal?

Post by "Godfrey" of November 19, 2023 at 5:00 PM

Just thinking over intensity, location and duration:

If Lucretius was deciding between spending a life as a shepherd or spending it writing didactic poetry, how would intensity, duration and duration apply? I tend to think of this breakdown in terms of maximizing overall pleasure. In this case:

- Duration for each choice is basically the same: his lifetime. He may consider that he can write poetry into old age, whereas he may not be able to herd sheep once his physical abilities decline. He could also compare whether one lifestyle would provide opportunities for more varieties of pleasure, whereas one might take up all of his waking hours.

- I think of location as referring to where in the body/mind feeling is experienced. It is interior to the body/mind, not something external. He could look at the physical (this is a location) pleasures and pains of being outside v being inside (outside v inside wouldn't be considered "location", but a particular external variable) in terms of how the pleasure of basking in the sun or the pain of being in the wind and rain. He may consider the mental pleasures of, say unfocused daydreaming or stream of consciousness philosophizing of a shepherd, or the mental pleasure of gathering knowledge of sheep and nature firsthand. He might compare this to the rigorous mental pleasure or pain of studying philosophy and composing verse.

- As to intensity, he may feel that he could experience much more intense pleasure with the poetic life, and a less intense pleasure with the life of a shepherd. He can then think about whether he prefers more or less intensity in this particular regard.

So thinking in terms of intensity, location and duration provides a framework for evaluating pleasures. I don't see this as a mathematical process of adding up hedons and dolons. It's an intuitive way of looking more specifically at what brings you pleasure or pain. A person may attempt to quantify from this, but that's pretty much beside the point. Even more, trying to count pleasure tokens seems to me to be counterproductive.

I don't know if I just clarified or mudding the issue....