

Tips On Offsetting Pleasures Against Pains

Post by "Don" of November 28, 2023 at 11:24 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

We are doing what we can to maximize pleasures of all kinds, and we are doing what we can to minimized pleasures of all kinds,

...minimize pains of all kinds...right? 😊

I agree with everything you wrote in post no. 20, [Cassius](#) . Well put.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The issue is more that the Doctrines are presuming an Epicurean understanding of so many key terms and concepts, and without that background understanding the simple words are generally taken to mean something much different than intended. It's not "simplification" of wording that is needed, it's more "additional" wording that explains the use of the terms.

Agreed. On that note, it's important to emphasize that all the epitomes, letters, Principle Doctrines, even *The Sayings of Epicurus* contained in the Vatican manuscript are summaries of voluminous teachings of the Epicurean school. They were literally - even explicitly, in the case of the letters - designed to remind the student of the larger body of teachings. They weren't an end in and of themselves. They were a useful means to an end. Even the Tetrapharmakos itself *needs* the full context of *all* the teachings and is meant as a memory aid not as an evangelism tool. So, "simplifying" them further is pointless if the wider doctrines and teachings aren't being pointed back to. If you try to use a summary to remind you of the content of just a larger summary, you're missing the reason for the initial summary in the first place.

As for evangelism and "spreading the word," we have Cicero complaining that the common people understood Epicurus's philosophy enough to be considered (by him, at least) members of the school. At it's most basic, Epicurean philosophy IS easy to understand. Let me take a stab:

1. Pleasure feels good. Pain feels bad.
2. Some pleasurable activities lead to pain.
3. Use your judgement to do more activities that bring long-term pleasure and avoid pain.
4. Take a second when you're just feeling good to notice that it feels good. You're not worried (at the moment). Your body feels good, too. That's what we mean by pleasure, too!

5. Make some friends to help you make better choices.
6. Don't worry about life after death, because you're not going to be aware that you don't exist!
7. Don't worry about being "in the hands of an angry god," because there's no reason any gods should concern themselves with you.
 1. Stick around to learn more about those last two if you want. For now, trust that we have good reasons to say them!

You can spend a lifetime (however long that is) studying, learning, discussing, internalizing the finer points; but those seven basics might be why Cicero was so angry about the hoi polloi being Epicureans. It's not that hard to "get started." And, no, I didn't mention physics, nor the details of how to choose and reject, nor a myriad of other things. But agreeing with those seven things doesn't seem a bad place to start for someone, in my opinion.