

Mark Twain Quote (On Death)

Post by "Don" of December 4, 2024 at 11:40 PM

I don't really have a dog in this fight and I'm not quite sure why I feel so adamant about defending Mark Twain; but, in any case, I appear to be staking my flag...

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

It reveals preference of non-existence over existence.

I don't see that at all. I don't see Twain expressing a preference for non-existence (or annihilation as he wrote it). I would say he certainly doesn't express it like an Epicurean, but I don't see him wanting to die. Or as [TauPhi](#) expressed it:

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

the only sensible course of action is taking Twain's hundred million years holiday prematurely... Mark Twain had some 75 years of opportunity to resume his holiday if he so truly desired and yet he didn't take it.

Twain simply says "when the opportunity comes" as it will definitely come for all of us. This sentiment of "when the opportunity comes" speaks to me of not railing against the coming of death when it becomes inevitable. By all means, I'll do what's prudent to stay healthy, but being kept alive by any means necessary is the antithesis (in my mind) of going out with a triumph-song on my lips (or at least in my mind).

When Twain writes "I look back upon with a tender longing and with a grateful desire to resume, *when the opportunity comes*", in my mind this is exactly the kind of sentiment expressed by the more Epicurean way of saying "Death does not concern me. I did not exist before I was born and I won't exist after I die. I had no cares, anxiety, worry, grief, or pain before I was born; I see no reason to suspect that I will have any of those after I die."

While I may be able to understand where some of the trepidation about the quote comes from, I see it as a very (let's say) *Epicurean-adjacent* sentiment.