

# Episode 270 - Life Is Desirable, But Unlimited Time Contains No Greater Pleasure Than Limited Time

Post by "Joshua" of February 22, 2025 at 4:26 PM

Quote from Epicurus and His Philosophy, by Norman DeWitt

[Epicurus'] finding is that time is "an accident of accidents," and, if his reasoning be closely scrutinized, time seems to be even less than this.

The line of reasoning may be sketched as follows: a human being is susceptible of sickness but sickness is not a permanent attribute, only a temporary condition, that is, an accident. Sickness in its turn may be long or short, but this quality of length or brevity is not a permanent attribute but an accident. Therefore it is an accident of an accident. Next, by analogy, since we associate time with states of health or sickness, the time of their duration is said to be long or short. Thus long and short become predicates of time while in reality they apply only to states of health or sickness. This amounts to saying that in the phrases "a long time" or "a short time" the adjectives are transferred epithets.

Incidentally, in the text of Epicurus this paragraph on the topic of time follows immediately upon the discussion of attributes and accidents. This juxtaposition confirms the assumption that the prolepsis is rightly interpreted as an anticipatory notion of the essential attributes of the subject of examination.

pp. 147-148

Following this line of thinking moves us firmly into [Bryan's](#) area, so perhaps he can comment.

Page 229 begins the subsection "Pleasure not increased by Immortality", which he ends thus;

Quote

The attainment to this state [the limit of pleasure], he now declares, is a condition of one dimension. He seems to think of it as an Alpinist would regard the ascent of an arduous mountain peak. The pleasure would not be increased by remaining on the peak.

Also, [Cassius](#) :

Quote

So Mitsis thinks that Epicurus would not say that if one has an option to choose between a long happy life and a short happy one he would choose the longer?

In fairness to Mitsis, I do not think this is his conclusion in the passage you quoted. If anything, Mitsis is saying that Epicurus *would* choose the long happy life over the short happy life, and that this choice involves him in a paradox.