

Glossary - What is the Epicurean Definition of "Pleasure?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 7:14 PM

Mike on this issue of ataraxia as the alleged highest pleasure I have summarized my research into the cites in THIS article: [The Full Cup / Fullness of Pleasure Model](#)

I have accumulated the cites that I have found that make clear that Epicurus was referring to pleasure in the same way we ordinarily understand that word, and I also point to links to the works of Plato which I believe explain why Epicurus developed the absence of pain terminology, as a means of logical refutation of the Platonic argument that pleasure cannot be the goal of life because pleasure allegedly is insatiable (has no limit): [The Full Cup / Fullness of Pleasure Model](#)

Several of the most clear text cites are this from Epicurus himself:

"It is observed too that in his treatise On the Ethical End he writes in these terms : "I know not how to conceive the good, apart from the pleasures of taste, of sex, of sound, and the pleasures of beautiful form."

- Diogenes Laertius, Book X

and this from Torquatus, which makes clear that the best life is one surrounded by numerous and vivid pleasures:

The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement.

and this from Cicero himself, which shows how you can easily and logically link tranquility to ordinary vivid pleasures without any contradiction:

Cicero, In defense of Publius Sestius, 10.23: "He {Publius Clodius} praised those most who are said to be above all others the teachers and eulogists of pleasure {the Epicureans}. ...

He added that these same men were quite right in saying that the wise do everything for their own interests; that no sane man should engage in public affairs; that *nothing was preferable to a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures.*