

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

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 9:02 PM

The metaphor that makes the most sense to me is the filling of a vessel, for example with a liquid. You fill the tank of your car with gasoline, and in doing so the air is expelled. The maximum that the tank can hold is when all the air is expelled. This is the point of maximum gasoline, and minimum air. But the nature of the gasoline is not changed when it reaches the maximum point of being filled.

Thus so, a life of pleasure has reached its height when it is filled with the experience of ordinary pleasures, of whatever type, and when the experience of your life has no further component of pain.

But there is nothing magic about the expelling of the last ounce of pain. The dancing and eating and drinking and appreciation of art and thinking and friends etc is just the same at the point of maximum pleasure as it is all along the way in the course of being filled -- the only difference is at the point of maximum pleasure there is no longer any distraction whatsoever from pain or turbulence.

in Cicero's words, nothing is better than a life of tranquility, crammed full of pleasures. That is the description of the moment when the person's experiences nothing but pleasures, and nothing can be better than that because the feeling - the experience - of the person is completely consumed with pleasures, and there is no room left -- no ability to experience anything else - beyond that.