

Pleasure and illness

Post by “Matt” of December 22, 2020 at 9:16 PM

Hi friends,

So the last few weeks have been rough. I caught “the virus” as did my wife and daughter. After months of being very careful our one calculated risk, our babysitter, let us know she had symptoms. Shortly thereafter so did we.

I had two weeks of fevers and pneumonia and the classic loss of taste and smell (which is apparently neurological).

During this time, I did reflect on my Epicurean understanding of how critically important pleasure is to a healthy life.

My smell and taste were entirely gone (mostly back now) and I began to think what a permanent condition would be like? A life deprived of sensual pleasure. Simple pleasure, something we all take for granted. Smell and taste, sight and hearing...touch. When the prospect becomes even remotely real that even one of these senses will be gone permanently a sort of anxiety and depression sets in.

Now I’m sure the Stoic will give a certain answer to that situation that will rob all sensual pleasures of purpose, living secure in their “mind citadel”...but frankly I must say no amount of Stoic counsel would’ve relieved my concern for not being able to acquire pleasures that I have become accustomed to. I speculated on how I might react to something like this being permanent...I thought perhaps I could attempt to compensate with other positive pleasures to make up for that which was lost. But even then though I could do that, the simple pleasures I am so accustomed to seemed so much greater and I found myself willing to trade any more exotic pleasures for my former senses. Pleasure is critical to a normative, healthy physical and mental state, no matter how simple or minor it may seem.

Anyway, this is just sort of where my head was at. Epicurean philosophy has “real” application for real life situations that occur. I can say that since I’ve been involved with EP, I’ve had a few of these life situations come up and EP has been exceptionally poignant and useful for reflection.