

Ruminating on desires and on the absence of pain....

Post by "Godfrey" of June 8, 2021 at 4:38 PM

Cassius you're absolutely right about Epicurus responding to Plato (also to Aristotle) and about the other passages in LM; I'm just having a go at it from another angle to see if there's any more clarity. But it's not like I'm the first to do that, so there's probably a limited payoff, particularly in parsing passages!

Don thanks for compiling those quotes! My bad with the zafu example, you make an excellent point. To put it more clearly, I was attempting to illustrate that absence of pain can be active and is not necessarily passive. But of course meditation is quite active, so point taken.

[Quote from Don](#)

548. ****Happiness**** and bliss# are produced not by great riches nor vast possessions nor exalted occupations nor positions of power, but rather by peace of mind, freedom from pain, and **a disposition of the soul that sets its limits in accordance with nature.**

Ruminating some more... regarding the "Rorschach test" I think the phrase "a disposition of the soul that sets its limits in accordance with nature" sums up part of it quite well. Is nature governed by a logos and ideal forms or is it atoms and void doing what they do? Are there gods that affect our lives? When we die, is that it for us? Does a person fully accept Epicurean physics and its implications? Even if they do, the extant texts can be confusing.

[Quote from Don](#)

Therefore, you ***must*** study and meditate on those things which produce ****eudaimonia!**** For if that is present, we truly have everything; but if that is not present, we will do everything to have it.

I guess that, to me, the problem we face is elevating absence of pain to "the goal," and the problem is twofold. First, it can lead to asceticism. Second, reacting against this can lead to minimizing absence of pain in relation to pleasure as part of the toolkit for choices and avoidances. Understanding both the positive and negative attributes of pleasure can lead to a deeper, fuller and more pleasurable life.

And sometimes the practice of sitting on a zafu can aid in this understanding, particularly by revealing *pathe* of which one wasn't even aware 😊