

The Pocket Epicurean by John Sellars

Post by "Cassius" of September 23, 2021 at 6:06 AM

"All we really want in life is pleasure."

I don't think sentence rings Epicurean, and that's a tip-off. I think we (and Epicurus too) are all familiar with people who have convinced themselves that pain and hardship are to be pursued in themselves. From Torquatus in "On Ends" - " But I must explain to you how all this mistaken idea of reprobating pleasure and extolling pain arose."

"a life well lived even in the hardest of times"

I think that's actually a very good formulation - better than he probably realizes given the rest of his views of Epicurus. For me, I am convinced that Epicurus' fundamental starting point was exactly that - to compare the alternatives (theism, idealism) and determine which one is well lived in the sens of *true* (meaning consistent with reality and nature). That's how you end up realizing that Nature gives us only pleasure and pain as stop and go signals, and that's why you end up with pleasure as the goal - not because you're soft and indulgent and just want to hide in your hole and escape pain, but because your rigorously and vigorously clear-eyed about the reality of life.

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You combine the text which Joshua quoted with the Stoic background both Don and Joshua cite and what do you come up with?

The nine-hundred ninety-ninth example that - if you are a writer grounded in England - you are seemingly of necessity going to be so "stoic" (small "s") that you would make Marcus Aurelius himself shake his head in embarrassment.

I don't really get that same vibe from David Sedley, so I have to question whether Sedley is really an Englishman. 😊 The situation is bad enough that it would make Epicurus himself doubt the existence of the swerve! 😊