

Things that happen after we die

Post by "Don" of February 4, 2022 at 7:27 AM

Here are some of my thoughts off the top of my head:

Planning for the future of his school and the security of the children of his friends (and the contemplation of that future) gave pleasure to Epicurus in his here and now. I have no doubt that he knew some of his plans wouldn't go as planned; however, he did what he reasonably could to assure, as best he could, that those plans would come to fruition. This alleviated some or all of the pain he might have felt in thinking about what might happen after he died. He knew he wouldn't see future events, would have no control of them, and so did what he could to affect them... And took pleasure now in the planning and in imagining those plans coming to fruition.

I think "responsibility" isn't the right word. The saying goes that some indigenous peoples think seven generations ahead in their stewardship of the land and resources. But that thinking also has ramifications in how the land and resources are managed now, making the present more sustainable and livable. We can really only affect change here and now. Epicurus wrote his will and made plans in his present. We can "reduce, reuse, recycle" in the present. We can hope for future benefits, but our actions take place now.

I have the same anxieties and may one day have descendants. But we have to keep perspective. As individuals, our individual actions will have a negligible effect on climate change. It's the same for many global problems. That doesn't mean I shouldn't do what I can. And, for some people, making their life's work living among the poor, taking direct action, etc. must give them pleasure (whether they'd say it that way or not) or they wouldn't do it. We've had similar threads on this before. If our pain at thinking about future events or of large scale crises gives us pain, we need to ask ourselves: What will alleviate this pain? We can ourselves become despondent at our helplessness or insignificance in combating these issues. And I've intentionally worded it that way, because I don't think *that* is an Epicurean perspective. We have to be clear-eyed and practical and honest about "What can I *really* do, here and now in my life, to alleviate my mental pain about these huge issues?" Epicurus doesn't give us easy answers or cookie cutter solutions. That can be unfortunate, scary, or liberating, depending on one's perspective... and maybe a little bit of all three?

Thanks for starting this thread. It could lead to some good discussion.