

"Zines' - By Kalosyni

Post by "Kalosyni" of March 10, 2022 at 12:38 PM

In the middle of a night (after being woken by the sound of the train horn) I began this possible text for a zine, based on some earlier writing by Cassius. This could be given out (or made available) at Epicurean meet-ups. Just now finished, and thinking this is pretty good introductory material as well.

"On Pleasure" -- (first draft) (possible text for a zine)

"Stranger, here you will do well to tarry, here our highest good is pleasure." This is the slogan traditionally attested to have been the "motto" of the original school of Epicurus in Athens.

Epicurus advocated living in such a way as to derive the greatest amount of pleasure in one's lifetime, yet doing so through "choices and avoidances" so as to prevent suffering from overindulgence which might detract from pleasurable experiences.

In some books, and also on some places on the internet, you may encounter people who talk as if Epicurus held "painlessness" or "tranquility" or "stillness" to be the highest good, as if they know better than Epicurus what he "should" have said. We hold this philosophical emphasis on tranquility as incorrect.

Our Epicurean philosophy group is devoted to a classical interpretation that takes Epicurus at his word based on his canonic and epistemology. We incorporate within this classical Epicurean system all his statements about tranquility and absence of pain in such a way as to give full effect to everything he said, without rewriting Epicurus to suit modern neo-Stoic idealism about the nature of virtue and pleasure. So while tranquility and absence of pain is considered to be pleasurable, it not considered an end goal, nor is it the guide to living the best life.

We welcome and encourage you to study and participate in our group with the goal of pleasure in view. We are mindful that there may be some who disagree with the "pleasure" emphasis, and we moderate our group discussions to ensure that those of us who wish to associate with the classical view have a safe place here to study with like-minded people.

We ask that you respect our goals within this group and if you find that you are firmly of the view that the word "painlessness" represents the ideal that you wish to be associated with in studying Epicurus, then we ask that you find other places outside our group to express your views (such as on the internet and at Facebook).

For those who are new to our group or to Epicurean Philosophy, we suggest studying the Epicurean texts to understand the path of pleasure within Epicureanism.

Since there is ambiguity in interpretation, please take your time in order to thoroughly understand the subtleties.

For those with previous study of Epicureanism, citations alone may not convince anyone who has previously made up their mind on this subject. Yet with curiosity, time, and observation of one's own life experiences, the wisdom of this understanding may come to be self-evident.

And now, if you feel the desire and patience to dive into examining this topic, we suggest the study of several of the most clear statements in the ancient Epicurean texts on this issue:

(1) [Epicurus' Letter to Menoeceus](#):

And for this cause we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good.

(2) Torquatus in Cicero's On Ends:

I will start then in the manner approved by the author of the system himself, by settling what are the essence and qualities of the thing that is the object of our inquiry; not that I suppose you to be ignorant of it, but because this is the logical method of procedure. We are inquiring, then, what is the final and ultimate Good, which as all philosophers are agreed must be of such a nature as to be the End to which all other things are means, while it is not itself a means to anything else. This Epicurus finds in pleasure; pleasure he holds to be the Chief Good, pain the Chief Evil. This he sets out to prove as follows: Every animal, as soon as it is born, seeks for pleasure, and delights in it as the Chief Good, while it recoils from pain as the Chief Evil, and so far as possible avoids it. This it does as long as it remains unperverted, at the prompting of Nature's own unbiased and honest verdict.

...

The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement.

(3) Diogenes of Oinoanda, Fragment 32

If, gentlemen, the point at issue between these people and us involved inquiry into "What is the means of happiness?" and they wanted to say "the virtues" (which would actually be true), it would be unnecessary to take any other step than to agree with them about this, without more ado. But since, as I say, the issue is not "what is the means of happiness?" but "What is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?", I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues, which are inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end. Let us therefore now state that this is true, making it our starting-point.