Another mainstream article claiming ataraxia is the goal

Post by “reneliza” of September 23, 2022 at 8:19 AM

> Quote from Don
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> First thoughts:
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> It may be admissible to describe Epicurus's description of the highest pleasure being the absence of pain as "idiosyncratic" simply because he shifts focus. It would be like describing a full glass of water as the absence of air in the glass. But the *real* import of saying there's not air in the glass is an "idiosyncratic" way of emphasized the point that the glass is completely filled to the rim with water. Your glass is completely filled with no room for any more water. Same with pleasure and pain. You wouldn't order a glass of water by saying "I'd like a glass completely devoid of air" unless you were trying to make some point. I think that's what Epicurus was doing with his absence of pain terminology. A life filled to the rim with pleasure *can be* thought of as a life lived in the absence of pain. It's not some arcane thing like some authors and academics try to make it out to be.
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> Another first thought:
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> So many authors and academics completely skip over this line that's right there:
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> Quote from Cicero's Torquatus
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> "*For the pleasure which we pursue is ***not that alone*** which excites the natural constitution itself by a kind of sweetness, and of which the sensual enjoyment is attended by a kind of agreeableness, but we look upon the greatest pleasure as that which is enjoyed when all pain is removed.*"
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> Not that alone! So "we pursue" that which excites the natural constitution itself by a kind of sweetness, and of which the sensual enjoyment is attended by a kind of agreeableness, but just not only that. We pursue both x and y.
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> I maintain that cultivating tranquility is an important component of an Epicurean life, an Epicurean practice, but that is not at the expense of that "which the sensual enjoyment is attended by a kind of agreeableness." It's both.
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Yep, all this.

I think the author does make one good point here, that pleasure isn't something that you add up by stacking pleasures atop one another cumulatively - that was the actual point that Epicurus was making with his limit of pleasure. Yes, THAT view of pleasure would be unlimited as you could keep stacking until you die, and how pleasurable your life is would only depend on how long it is.

I really don't think this one seems all that bad. Mostly I see people speak of the virtue of "moderation" or "temperance" to mean "none ever under any circumstances or you'll ruin your life" (on the epicurean subreddit I had someone ask me if I'd suggest that he should use only "a little" crystal meth and I'm like "well I'm not here to run your life...." haha) and here he suggests that you should SHOULD satisfy your desires to the point that it brings you the most pleasure without causing you undue pain.

If anything, it sounds like this might be one of us trying to blend in with the modern landscape of Epicureans by pointing to ataraxia as the goal, but then saying that doesn't actually mean you eschew all sensual pleasure.