


# Did Epicurus Commit Suicide Due To His Disease? (Merger of Two Threads On When Voluntary Death Makes Sense)

Post by "Cassius" of December 8, 2022 at 9:31 PM

He had completed seventy-seven years in such a manner, and into extreme old age had advanced no less in dignity than in influence and fortune - for he obtained many inheritances exclusively by his own goodness - and had enjoyed such good health that he had not needed medicine for thirty years, then he fell ill. At the beginning neither he nor his physicians took it seriously, for they thought it was a gripping of the bowel [i.e. dysentery] for which swift and simple remedies were proposed. When he had suffered for three months in this condition without any pain except for those he experienced from the treatment, the disease burst so violently into his lower intestine that at the end ulcers full of pus burst through his loins.

And before this befell him, after he felt the pains increase daily and the fever grow, he gave orders for his son-in-law Agrippa to be summoned, and Lucius Cornelius Balbus and Sextus Peducaeus along with him. When he saw they had come, he leaned on one elbow and said: "How much care and attention I have devoted to restoring my health recently I do not need to tell at length, since I have you as witnesses. Since I have, I hope, satisfied you that I have left nothing undone that might serve to cure me, all that is left is that I now look after my own well-being. I did not wish you to be ignorant of my purpose: for I am resolved no longer to nourish the disease. For however much food I have taken in these last days, I have so prolonged my life as to increase the pain without hope of recovery. Thus I beg of you both to approve of my resolution and not to try to shake me by pointless dissuasion"

 After giving this speech with such resolve in his voice and expression that he seemed not to be quitting life but moving from one house to another, Agrippa in particular embraced him in tears and begged him not to hasten his death over and above nature's compulsion, and, since even then he might survive the crisis, to preserve himself for his own sake and for the sake of those dearest to him, but Atticus quelled his pleas with silent obstinacy. So when he had abstained from food for two days, the fever suddenly abated and the disease began to be more bearable. Nevertheless he carried through his resolution undeviatingly and so died on the fifth day after he made his decision, on the last day of March when Gnaeus Domitius and Gaius Sosius were consuls [March 31<sup>st</sup>, 22 BCE]. He was carried to his burial on a modest bier as he had himself directed, without any funeral procession, but escorted by all men of substance and by very large crowds of the common people. He was buried by the Appian Way at the fifth milestone, in the tomb of his maternal uncle Quintus Caecilius.