

# 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 10:12 PM

I see James Warren says ("Facing Death - Epicurus And His Critics):

Of course, the Epicureans do agree that suicide would be the end of these people's cares, but it is certainly not the preferred course of action. If only these poor souls would instead find out from the Epicureans that death is nothing to fear, then they would be able to manage their lives properly and find true pleasure in it. Suicide, therefore, is generally a sign of having seriously misguided opinions about the world. However, there are clearly occasions and circumstances when an Epicurean too would be justified in ending his own life. While extolling the virtue of courage, Torquatus allows that in the face of certain pains suicide might be acceptable:

sic robustus animus...ad dolores ita paratus est ut meminerit maximos morte finiri, parvos multa habere intervallarequietis, mediocrium nos esse dominos ut si tolerabiles sint feramus, si minus, animo aequo e vita, cum ea nonplaceat, tamquam e theatro exeamus.

A strong soul is so readied against pains that it remembers that the greatest are curtailed by death, the small ones are punctuated by long intervals of peace, and we are in control of those of a medium strength so that if they can be endured we endure them and if not we may leave life calmly if it does not please us, just as we may leave the theatre. Cic. Fin. 1.49

The message here is that someone properly schooled can endure even quite severe pains, but if even this ability is challenged by ongoing and unendurable distress then it is open to us to leave life. Importantly, this is done calmly and rationally (aequo animo);344