

# 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 10:14 PM

More from James Warren (same source):

it is the result of a calculation that the alternative would be a continued life of pain. Provided life has pleasure left in it, we will continue to live. And the Epicurean sage will be sufficiently schooled to continue to find pleasure in life under conditions which others would find unbearable—Epicurus' own example of composure in the face of terminal illness demonstrates this. 345 Seneca reports the suicide of an Epicurean named Diodorus. On this occasion it is not so clear whether or not he is acting in strict accordance with Epicurean teaching.

Diodorum, Epicureum philosophum, qui intra paucos dies finem vitae suae manu sua imposuit, negant ex decreto Epicuri fecisse, quod sibi gulam praesecuit. alii dementia videri volunt factum hoc eius, alii temeritatem; ille interim beatus ac plenus bona conscientia reddidit sibi testimonium vita excedens laudavitque aetatis in portu et ad ancoram actae quietem et dixit, quod vos inviti audistis, quasi vobis quoque faciendum sit, 'vixi et quem dederat cursum fortuna peregi' (=Verg. Aen. 4.653).

They say that the Epicurean philosopher Diodorus, who just recently ended his own life by his own hand, did not act according to Epicurus' doctrine because he cut his own throat. Some want this deed to be seen as madness, others as rashness. But he, happy and full of good understanding, bore witness to himself as he left life, praised the tranquility of a life spent in port at anchor, 346 and said something which you did not like to hear, as if you too ought to follow its advice: 'I have lived, and finished the course which fortune dealt me'. Sen. De Vita Beata 19.1

Again, the accusation of un-Epicurean behaviour seems to be on the basis of Diodorus acting not out of a sound and rational consideration of the situation but out of either madness or temperance. Seneca, however, is keen to emphasize Diodorus' calm at the end, based not only on the appreciation of a tranquil life lived but also on the acceptance that that life had come to the end of its course. What is not clear from this description is just why Diodorus had decided to quit a pleasant life, and this is presumably the reason why some were suspicious of his motives