

Would You Rather Live For A Week As (1) Epicurus During the Last Week of His Life or (2) An Anonymous Shepherd Laying In The Grass In The Summertime With No Pain At All?

Post by "Cassius" of September 13, 2023 at 9:29 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Agreed... But have we answered your question about Epicurus?

In terms of the original hypothetical question, I don't think we have answered that. I don't think there is an answer that applies to everyone except in general terms, but thinking through the problem does - in my view - help focus the mind.

I would think it is crucial for people to realize that the pleasures of the body (the shepherd in the field) don't always or even most of the time trump the pleasures of the mind (Epicurus). The difficult aspect is the amount of physical pain Epicurus was in, and that leads us to examine how we personally want to measure physical vs mental pains and pleasures.

The development of exercises to encourage people to focus on seeing how mental pleasures and physical pleasures combine to constitute the full goal of "pleasure" is probably a good idea. And in the meantime we can explain that, given there is no neutral state, if you are not in pain you are feeling pleasure, and if you truly are feeling "no" pain then you are feeling the most pleasure that is possible for you to feel.

So the sentence I included above about the dentist needs to be seen as not a word game, but indicative of an organizing perspective on everything in life:

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think one of the real challenges is how to convey a mindset such that it isn't shocking to think that if you tell your dentist: "Doctor my tooth does not hurt," then your dentist should justifiably say in return: "Then your tooth is at the height of pleasure!"

Since "Pleasure" is the flag that stands against religious superstition, idealism, nihilism, and the rest, it's important to think clearly about how sweeping a term pleasure is, and to then realize exactly how, and in what respect, "the absence of pain is pleasure." The wording is very defensible but cries out for further explanation, and if that explanation is not provided then under current circumstances very little is gained and even worse much is lost given the

background static that distorts the message.

Once that perspective becomes understandable and not seen as a call to ascetic transcendentalism, then the common sense application of the desires and pursuing those that are natural and necessary and looking to what will happen to us as a result of our choices and all the other advice falls into perfect consistency and common sense.