

Mental pleasure/pain more intense and longer lasting than physical pleasure/pain

Post by “frank1syl” of December 11, 2023 at 10:35 AM

The reason I had asked the question about the written source of the Epicurean belief that mental pain is worse or longer lasting than physical pain is that I was thinking about how this has a connection to the Stoic principle that "some things are in our power while others are not". The Stoics believe that the things in our power are the things that come from us (our attitudes, beliefs, judgments, desires, aversions, intentions, motives, will to act). In other words, the things in our power are mental abilities and capacities. I believe this is true, although I'm not a Stoic. I believe that Epicureanism has it right when it says that mental pain is worse than physical pain. But, taking my cue from the Stoics, the way to lessen mental pain is to realize that this is an area in which we have considerable power, and to focus on our mental capacities and abilities, rather than external events or circumstances, is the best way to approach mental pain. This is often the opposite of how we try to lessen mental pain, which is to try to change our circumstances -- go on a cruise, buy a new car, redecorate our homes, take a pill, increase our aim for what is neither natural nor necessary, etc.