

Is A Fish Dinner A Better Prescription For Pain Than a Treatise of Socrates?

Post by "Cassius" of April 25, 2019 at 8:41 AM

Yes Poster, I do agree with you. Pleasures are pleasures, because our feelings tell us they are, and any part of our experience which is pleasurable means that that part is not painful. But pleasures and pain do vary in things like intensity and duration. If it were possible to make up for the death of a friend by continuously eating ice cream then that would be a valid strategy, and we would have no reason to complain about such a person who did so (see [PD10](#)). But in the nature of things some pains are much more intense and long-lasting than can be dealt with fully by ice cream or music. Temporary physical pleasures are not sufficient to rid us of fear of gods or eternal punishment after death, and so we have to study nature and come to the mental understanding, through the pleasure of philosophy, that those things do not exist. Likewise I think that there are many events in life that require mental / emotional responses.

Epicurus reduced his physical pain by surrounding himself with his friends and reminding himself of the pleasures he had experienced through those friends and through philosophy. If we lose a friend, we can recall the good times that we had with them, and think about how we would never have given that up just because we knew we would lose them some day (as per argument in book 10 of A Few Days In Athens).

This is one of the big issues facing many of us today. The world is not friendly to Epicurean and Epicurean philosophy, and seems to be getting less friendly every day. Some people tell us to retreat to our gardens and essentially eat cake. But an observant Epicurean is not going to be content with that. An observant Epicurean will be mentally troubled by the current and impending implication of events, and will have to find a way more potent than food and drink to override that pain. I think that is very doable - and the answer is through focusing on the mental and emotional pleasures that come from not only studying Epicurean philosophy, but taking active steps to promote it, protect it, and work toward its emerging from the shadows one day.

That's essentially what Epicurus and the founders did, it's what Lucretius did, it's what Diogenes of Oinoanda did, and I submit that - while every situation is different - it's what most of us should do to.