

Would Epicurus say: "Infinite Time contains no more pain than limited time when the limit of pain is measured by reason?"

Post by "Don" of July 20, 2024 at 11:38 PM

Finite time and infinite time contain the same amount of joy, if its limits are measured out through reasoning. [Saint-Andre translation; Also VS22, by the way]

Unlimited time and limited time afford an equal amount of pleasure, if we measure the limits of that pleasure by reason. [Hicks]

See also:

Thread

[VS22 - Source in Vat.gr.1950](#)

Same as [PD19](#) (supposedly)...

[PD19](#) (Saint-Andre translation):

Finite time and infinite time contain the same amount of joy, if its limits are measured out through reasoning.

ὁ ἄπειρος χρόνος ἴσην ἔχει τὴν ἡδονὴν καὶ ὁ πεπερασμένος, ἐάν τις αὐτῆς τὰ πέρατα καταμετρήσῃ τῷ λογισμῷ.

VS22 from manuscript: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1950.pt.2/0256

epicureanfriends.com/wcf/attachment/3965/

(Big red capital omicron) ὁ ἄπειρος χρόνος καὶ ὁ πεπερασμένος...



Don

July 15, 2023 at 4:32 PM

I don't necessarily like "joy" instead of pleasure. The word is ἡδονὴν and I feel it's important to show it is one of the feelings: pleasure and pain, which led Joshua (I believe) to ask the insightful question that he did.

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3973-would-epicurus-say-infinite-time-contains-no-more-pain-than-limited-time-when-th/?postID=31540#post31540>

I also think it's important to disregard the PD numbers. They weren't in the original. And I believe we need to read the full text on this topic in context:

As soon as the pain produced by the lack of something is removed, pleasure in the flesh is not increased but only embellished. Yet the limit of enjoyment in the mind is produced by thinking through these very things and similar things, which once provoked the greatest fears in the mind. Finite time and infinite time contain the same amount of joy (pleasure), if its limits are measured out through reasoning. The flesh assumes that the limits of joy (pleasure) are infinite, and that infinite joy can be produced only through infinite time. But the mind, thinking through the goal and limits of the flesh and dissolving fears about eternity, produces a complete way of life and therefore has no need of infinite time; yet the mind does not flee from joy, nor when events cause it to exit from life does it look back as if it has missed any aspect of the best life. One who perceives the limits of life knows how easy it is to expel the pain produced by a lack of something and to make one's entire life complete; so that there is no need for the things that are achieved through struggle.

Now, if we would switch pleasure and pain, how does that affect the meaning of this section? Can we even do it? From the first line:

As soon as the pain produced by the lack of something is removed...

There is no "*pleasure produced by the lack of something*" unless it is the pleasure of the lack of pain. So, it seems to me that the "the same amount of joy (pleasure)" can't be substituted for "the same amount of pain" because pain seems, by definition, to be produced by a lack of something? So while the question can be asked semantically, it can't really be asked due to the parameters being set out. The question is a sensible question on its face, but it can't really be asked or answered in reality. I think??

I guess we'd have to ask what is the limit of pain? The complete lack of pleasure, I suppose? If we do try that experiment:

As soon as the pleasure produced by the lack of something is removed, pain in the flesh is not increased but only embellished. Yet the limit of pain in the mind is produced by thinking through these very things and similar things, which once provoked the greatest joy in the mind. Finite time and infinite time contain the same amount of pain, if its limits are measured out through reasoning. The flesh assumes that the limits of pain are infinite, and that infinite pain can be produced only through infinite time. But the mind, thinking through the goal and limits of the flesh and dissolving fears about eternity, produces a complete way of life and therefore has no need of infinite time; yet the mind does not flee from pain, nor when events cause it to exit from life does it look back as if it has missed any aspect of the worst life. One who perceives the limits of life knows how easy it is to expel the pleasure produced by a lack of something and to make one's entire life complete; so that there is no need for the things that are achieved through struggle.

LOL It's getting late... so I'll leave this as a writing prompt if nothing else. Look forward to others' thoughts!