

Episode 270 - Life Is Desirable, But Unlimited Time Contains No Greater Pleasure Than Limited Time

Post by "Cassius" of February 22, 2025 at 10:35 AM

Again, Don thank you because that article leads to finding what Sedley and Long say on this. Unfortunately Mitsis disagrees with Long and Sedley and finds their argument deficient.

So once again I find myself disagreeing with those who disagree with Sedley 😊 Here is Mitsis's summary of the Long and Sedley position - for example even in the first sentence here - I would say Mitsis is wrong in saying that duration is "unimportant." So Mitsis is defending Cicero's view and Sedley attacks Cicero:

Quote

In closing, I want to return briefly to Epicurus' claim about the unimportance of duration in rational assessments of the overall pleasantness of our lives (KD 19-21). Cicero takes Epicurus to be clearly (though wrongly) denying that pleasure is increased by duration (*voluptatem crescere longinquitate*) or rendered more valuable by its continuance (*De Fin. ii 83*). Recently, several scholars have resisted Cicero's interpretation because they take Epicurus to be claiming something much less bewildering about the role of duration in our evaluation of pleasures. Long and Sedley, for instance, argue that Epicurus does not mean to assert that time has no bearing at all in assessing quantities of pleasure. Rather, in their view, he is claiming that we can experience the same level of pleasure in a finite or infinite time.³⁶ Pleasure is something with clear natural limits and we can reach these limits as soon as we understand them sufficiently. Epicurus is thus merely observing that we do not need an infinite amount of time to come to such an understanding; nor could any particular complete experience of pleasure reach more intense levels, even if we repeated it an infinite number of times.

On this interpretation, Epicurus must still admit that death can cut short and hence harm the happiness of mortals enjoying even these most complete levels of pleasure. He might therefore readily acknowledge that a long, happy life is preferable to a short, happy one. Long's and Sedley's reading has obvious attractions inasmuch as it leaves Epicurus with a much less paradoxical claim to defend

So Mitsis thinks that Epicurus would not say that if one has an option to choose between a long happy life and a short happy one he would choose the longer?

Sorry Phil, i have to go with Long and Sedley on that one!

I think Mitsis is flatly wrong in saying that duration is of no significance to happiness. The longer is not NECESSARILY greater, because there are other factors that can come into play (intensity and parts of the body) but that doesn't mean that time is irrelevant.