

Article on Lucretius and "Death is Nothing to Us"

Post by "Don" of April 13, 2025 at 10:21 AM

Quote

As Lucretius summarizes in book two of On The Nature of Things, Epicurists believe the ultimate good for human nature is as follows:

To avoid bodily pain, to have a mind free from anxiety and fear, and to enjoy the pleasures of the senses.

I'm curious to read the whole article, but I saw this quote above and found it intriguing.

1. I never thought of the word "Epicurist" but it's certainly more compact than "student of Epicurean philosophy."

2. I was initially reluctant to endorse that summary, but, on reflection, that's not a bad summary. Let me explain my perspective:

To avoid bodily pain - As long as this is interpreted to mean "avoid" and not eliminate. "Epicurists" make choices to experience pain to avoid more future pain.

to have a mind free from anxiety and fear - I may get pushback, but I still see this as an essential part of the philosophy. A mind free from anxiety and fear is a baseline to make prudent choices and to fully experience sensual pleasures.

to enjoy the pleasures of the senses - Yep, in all their multifariousness.

This is all with the caveat that ANY summary is reductive and comes with issues, ex. the Tetrapharmakos. I remain an advocate for that summary while also acknowledging its shortcomings.