

Article By Dr. Emily Austin - "Epicurus And The Politics Of The Fear Of Death"

Post by "Cassius" of December 13, 2025 at 8:19 PM

For someone debating whether to comment on this article, here again is one of the key paragraphs:

Quote

However, note that if Warren is right, the Epicurean seems to lack a clear reason to avoid a painless death. Why should she skip town when she hears that the local tyrant has a penchant for killing aspiring Epicureans painlessly in their sleep? If painless deaths are not bad, then why should she carefully label and store the fast-acting, tasty poison, rather than leave it in the open and accessible to young children? One must wonder what protects the Epicurean from happily courting a painless death. If she does not bother to protect herself against such deaths, then the objection that the fear of death is good if it helps us avoid deaths worth avoiding reasserts itself.

The question comes down to: It's **not** the fear of pain, alone that should cause us to not want to die. But if our only distinction in discussion fear of death is whether the means of death is painful or not, then we're left in the position of not having a good reason (if fear of pain is our only motivation) to avoid a painless death.

Austin is pointing out that this is a problem for those who think that Epicurean philosophy is about nothing more than "fleeing from pain," and she suggests - I think properly - that this could not have been Epicurus himself would not have reasoned in that way and left his followers with no reason not to avoid a painless death.

As I see it this is related to similar issues in the regard to how to articulate "satisfaction." Yes I want to be satisfied at all times which my life in the past and present. but that doesn't mean that I don't want to live another day and experience more pleasure tomorrow.

Neither "death is nothing to us" nor the various statements about satisfaction should be interpreted in a way that implies that the Epicurean should be indifferent to whether he is alive or dead tomorrow.