

What Would Epicurus Say To Someone Who Said To Him That The Value of Being Dead and Being Alive Are Equal?

Post by “Pacatus” of June 25, 2026 at 12:50 PM

[Quote from Todd](#)

It is quite possible to arrive at this conclusion without any logical inconsistencies. For example, if you believe your telos to be removal of pain, then it would be perfectly consistent to see death as a shortcut to that end. In that case, death would not be merely a matter of indifference, but should actually be preferred over life, which will inevitably involve pain at times. The only inconsistency would be a failure to act on that conclusion.

In thinking on this from [Todd](#), I recalled (from Kurt Lampe’s *The Birth of Hedonism: The Cyrenaic Philosophers and Pleasure as a Way of Life*) that the same logic was attributed to a later Cyrenaic philosopher, Hegesias. Lampe refers to “Hegesias’ pessimism,” arguing: “I suggest that Hegesias is very far from resigning himself to pessimism. To the contrary, he positively embraces it as one aspect of a radical but coherent existential choice.”

Here is a summary from Wiki: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegesias_of_Cyrene

This seems much at odds with earlier Cyrenaic philosophy, e.g., that of Aristippus and Aristippus the Younger (the Metrodidact). Lampe comments: “It is odd, of course, for Hegesias to declare pleasure the only complete good and then to make ‘living neither painfully nor distressingly’ his comprehensive end. We would expect him to follow the Metrodidact in aiming to ‘live pleasantly.’ However, on this point Hegesias agrees—at least superficially—with the Cyrenaics’ critics.”

I certainly can’t see this as consistent with Epicurus.