

"A Dilemma For Epicureanism" (Comments On An Article Critical of the Epicurean view of death)

Post by "Cassius" of April 15, 2018 at 6:52 PM

Not knowing when I will be able to get back to this topic, I will state this further. Most of the criticisms I see to "[Death is nothing to us](#)" center on the supposed view of Epicurus that it does not matter how long we live. I consider that contention absurd, and do not believe that Epicurus or Lucretius made it. The essential point of this doctrine in Epicurean philosophy is that there is no afterlife in which to suffer punishment. Period - full stop. To contend that it is of no difference to the living whether die in lingering pain, or quickly, or whether we live for another hour or another hundred years is absurd on its face. There is nothing in the texts that compels the conclusion that Epicurus advised his students to accept such an opinion and such conclusions arise only from cramped and hostile interpretations of Epicurean philosophy..

Such an argument is the best I can deduce from the opening abstract quoted below. Maybe indeed there are "modern Epicureans" who contend such a thing, but I certainly would not. Again, if anyone wants to wade through the jargon and post further on this article, please do.

"Perhaps death's badness is an illusion. Epicureans think so and argue that agents cannot be harmed by death when they're alive (because death hasn't happened yet) nor when they're dead (because they do not exist by the time death comes). I argue that each version of Epicureanism faces a fatal dilemma: it is either committed to a demonstrably false view about the relationship between self-regarding reasons and well-being or it is involved in a merely verbal dispute with deprivationism. I first provide principled reason to think that any viable view about the badness of death must allow that agents have self-regarding reason to avoid (or seek) death if doing so would increase their total well-being. I then show that Epicurean views which do not preserve this link are subject to reductio arguments and so should be rejected. After that, I show that the Epicurean views which accommodate this desideratum are involved in a merely verbal dispute with deprivationism."