

Elena Nicoli - An Excellent Presentation On Epicurean Pleasure

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Here is a summary of the presentation, prepared by me for discussion purposes.

Summary of A Presentation By Elena Nicoli

1. In recent times her motivation and enthusiasm were drained because her objectives seemed difficult or impossible to achieve.
2. People were making all sorts of suggestions as to what she should pursue, but she wasn't sure about any of them.
3. She asked herself: Must everything that is worth pursuing be so difficult?
4. The answer she found was in the research in front of her - in her study of Lucretius and Epicurean philosophy.
5. Epicurus was an ancient Greek philosophy who taught a form of what is called "hedonism"
6. Epicurus taught that the one thing toward which our actions should be directed is "pleasure."
7. But if she accepts this, should she not be at a party or drinking instead of giving this lecture?
8. The answer is "no," because Epicurus' definition of pleasure is not what we generally understand it to be.
9. Epicurus did not suggest that we live a life of partying. In fact, he suggested living a modest life in the countryside, and living it simply, with bread and cheese, and not a dissolute lifestyle.
10. Epicurus said we should consider our actions from three perspectives:
 1. Are they natural and necessary? These are things we must have such as food and shelter.
 2. Are they natural but not necessary? These are things like sexual intercourse and fine foods. We should indulge these only occasionally.
 3. Are they neither natural nor necessary?
 1. These are things like wealth, power, and fame.
 2. We should never pursue these because the pleasure we derive from them is not genuine pleasure.
 3. These feel pleasurable but they do so because society tells us that they are pleasurable.
 4. Also, we can never get enough of these pleasures, and if we pursue them we will never feel satisfied and this will bring anxiety. No matter what we achieve we will always need more - but it never works like that - we get accustomed

to new levels and we always want more.

4. What we really need to be happy is simple - food drink, shelter, small amount of money to live decently, and good friends.
 5. We can reassure ourselves that these we can easily get at any time, and these are all we really need to be happy.
11. What did Epicurus really teach?
1. According to Epicurus highest form of pleasure is static pleasure - to be free from mental and physical pain. Epicurus was criticized for this because seems to some like being being asleep.
 2. But this criticism is not fair because Epicurus did not intend that we seek ONLY the removal of pain, this is a state in which not only is pain absent, but it is a state of relaxed freshness that feels good.
 3. In addition, Epicurus also held there are kinetic pleasures -pleasures in motion - such as friends, massages, walking on sunny day, and these are included in our goals.
 4. So Epicurus taught the pursuit of pleasure, not overindulgence.
12. To apply these ideas to everyday life:
1. This is a model for inspiration for every day, not an end goal to reach before we can consider ourselves as satisfied.
 2. What does it mean to live according to Epicurus?
 1. It means to realize that even the absence of pain is a pleasure. This is difficult to accept because we think of pleasure as pleasing to the senses, but looking at it that way is unsatisfiable and increasingly difficult to get.
 2. So what we should try to do is to identify happiness in our minds as a state of no physical pain and no mental concerns.
 3. But we can also embellish this state with pleasures in motion - friends, good food, and walking on sunny day - because pain is not present in these.
 3. As another practical example: Before saying yes to any job or task, ask yourself: "Is this what I myself want, or am I doing this to please society? Will this choice really make my life more pleasurable, or will it bring more pain than pleasure?"
13. In sum:
1. The things that really matter don't have to be so hard. [PD21](#): "He who understands the limits of life knows that it is easy to obtain that which removes the pain of want and makes the whole of life complete and perfect. Thus he has no longer any need of things which involve struggle."
 2. Therefore embracing hedonism and Epicurus could be the best thing we can do for ourselves.