

"Are We Indifferent to Death?"

Post by "Cassius" of March 27, 2018 at 3:16 PM

A Question from the Facebook Forum:

"Hey everyone. Epicurus says that Death is indifferent to us. Does It mean that If I'm sick I have no good reason to take a medicament that could save my life?"

My response:

Cassius Amicus I will go further than the posts so far. In my view, Epicurus has clearly said that life is DESIRABLE, and dying is UNDESIRABLE. FULL STOP. Absolutely clear. No need for dialectical word-chopping.

Given the same balance of pleasure and pain throughout the period, it is no doubt better to live ten years than five. We are not and should not be INDIFFERENT to death - that is a Stoic word and a Stoic attitude. Our life, and the lives of our friends, are the most important thing we have and we must act to keep it. Pleasure (and pain) have no meaning to the dead - all that is good occurs in life.

The reason that so much of what is written about this is confusing is that Epicurus was emphasizing the central point that "the state of being dead" - which does not really exist to the dead person, only to us thinking about it - is a state in which there is no pain or punishment to worry about. Therefore once we are dead we don't care about anything because we are no longer exist to care about anything. The entire thrust of this "[death is nothing to us](#)" is the focus on "the state of being dead" is not a concern because there is no hell, no god to punish us, no awareness of regret or awareness of anything.

So OF COURSE if you are sick you take medicine. While you are alive, you eat well, you exercise your mind and your body, you act to protect yourself from enemies of all kinds and you act in every reasonable way possible, consistent with your expectation of your personal pain pleasure calculus under your personal circumstances, to extend your life as long as possible, as you know that for an eternity thereafter you will no longer exist.

If I think about this long enough it really steams me that we even need to have this discussion. PLEASURE is the goal / guide of life and the only thing that is desirable in itself -- and pleasure has no meaning except to the living. The alternative suggestion is Christian/Stoic/Platonic "salvation" theory that equates some few moments of virtue/pure reason/etc as superior to a lifetime of pleasure. Epicurus would have considered that to be absurd, and probably wrung his hands to see how something so clear as this could be so misunderstood and warped in the hands of those who don't understand the role of life and pleasure.[3](#)

I am not aiming this at you George because the question you ask is asked all the time. But remember from the Epicurean part of Cicero's On Ends:

"Every animal, as soon as it is born, seeks for pleasure, and delights in it as the Chief Good, while it recoils from pain as the Chief Evil, and so far as possible avoids it. This it does as long as it remains unperverted, at the prompting of Nature's own unbiased and honest verdict."

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"No! Epicurus was not uneducated: the real philistines are those who ask us to go on studying till old age the subjects that we ought to be ashamed not to have learnt in boyhood."

We live in a world that is so incredibly perverted. No kitten or puppy or human baby would be could be mistaken that living is good, and dying is bad, and yet as we grow older we are "educated" to be confused about it.

The perversion and corruption is **STRONG**, and it takes strength of mind to battle back against it. Fighting philosophical and religious corruption and learning to embrace life, and fight death, and not feeble discussion of cupcakes and wine, like a bunch of dottering old men, is what Epicurus is all about.

"So his force,
His vital force of mind, a conqueror
Beyond the flaming ramparts of the world
Explored the vast immensities of space
With wit and wisdom, and came back to us
Triumphant, bringing news of what can be
And what cannot, limits and boundaries,
The borderline, the bench mark, set forever.
Religion, so, is trampled underfoot,
And by his victory we reach the stars."

Humphries / Lucretius Book 1