

All Pleasure Is Desirable, Because It Is Pleasing To Us, But Is All Pleasure *Equally* Desirable?

Post by "Cassius" of May 7, 2018 at 10:10 PM

Thank you for the very detailed continuation. I will try to do each point justice, but I think our different conclusions stem from very different premises.

Several times in your comments I observe comments which to me seem to focus on pain. For example, I would not agree with "pleasures must be ranked based on their capacity to achieve freedom from pain." I see pleasures as being very subjective, and I would not presume to judge someone else's ranking. If someone wants to give up years of life in order to spend five minutes "on the mountaintop" because he finds that pleasure so intense as to be worthwhile, I would not presume to second-guess that choice, and I do not believe Epicurus would either. "And even as men choose of food not merely and simply the larger portion, but the more pleasant, so the wise seek to enjoy the time which is most pleasant and not merely that which is longest."

So when you write "because both the toil to achieve such pleasures and the anxieties accompanying them will render them, in the end, "un-free" from pain" I simply look at the goal totally differently. The goal as I understand Epicurus is pleasure - which is not an abstraction or a state, but pleasureable living - the accumulating of common ordinary pleasurable experiences. I wish to purchase those with as little pain as possible, but as a human being it is not possible to live without pain. I minimize it to the extent possible, but I am not here to escape pain as my primary goal - my primary goal is to experience pleasure, without which no pain would be worthwhile.

As for this "I would contest then the idea that the vessel of human life cannot be expanded" I should be clear. When I say "cannot be expanded" I mean simply that at SOME point it is ended by death. Within that scope there is a huge variety of length and experiences - some never escape childhood, some live past 100. There is a limit set by death, but a wide variety of time within that.

Also I never would see it fair to speak in these terms: "If pleasure is simply dopamine" While it is true that the effect of pleasure is to crowd out pain, that is not the PURPOSE of pleasure. Pleasure is desirable in itself; the crowding out of pain is secondary.

"So it is not a problem that the vessel is not full, it is enough that it consists of no pain." And this is the position that calls out to me ; "Then why not commit suicide?" There is certainly no pain in being dead, and if "absence of pain" taken literally and without reference to pleasure, is the overriding goal, then a quick death is exactly the ticket.

All discussions like this are extremely helpful - at least to me - because this is a huge difference in perspective. People who come from such different perspectives may never agree, but it is very helpful to articulate the difference in perspective as clearly as possible.

(I am sorry I was interrupted during this post but I think my reply is at least partly coherent.)

But I do want to repeat that I think what we are discussing is the most important topic possible for people studying Epicurus to discuss.