

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

Post by "Cassius" of May 10, 2018 at 9:26 PM

"I think Epicurus taught different pleasures have different desirabilities." <<< Yes Daniel and you and I are totally in agreement with that. I think that Pivot, however, was stating a different position, at least initially.

Now here - "There are many times I think pleasure and pain come together, such as when one feels both happy and sad at the same time." That is definitely the case, but the issue I think Epicurus was aiming at is whether the two (pleasure and pain) are a mixture into a new third substance, or whether they retain their discrete qualities (sort of like oil and water, which can be shaken together but don't really mix.

Before I go further on that point let me ask you this: Have you read Norman DeWitt's Epicurus and His Philosophy which is discussed throughout this site? if you have not, I urge you to get that book, as it presents Epicurean philosophy in a systematic way that I don't think is equaled by any other book. Of course you may disagree with some of its interpretations, and of course you may disagree with Epicurus on something, but it's not possible to decide whether you agree or disagree til you really understand Epicurus' position.

Having said that, my reading from DeWitt and elsewhere indicates that this issue of mixing of pleasure and pain is very deep, and arises from arguments started by Plato and others to which Epicurus was responding. Possibly you are not concerned with the issue of "only two - pleasure and pain" as much as you are concerned with whether they "mix." In order to understand that you will need to fall back to what Plato was arguing AGAINST the idea of using pleasure and pain as the guide of life, and that is more complicated than I can address in this post.

Let me know if you have the time and inclination to pursue that, because if you do (and I very much recommend it) there are a couple of sources you will want to read. one of them is Gosling and Taylor's "The Greeks on pleasure" which is not easy to find, but is available through any library. that book traces the history of the arguments about pleasure from the beginning up through Epicurus, and I think it is pretty much indispensable to understanding the big picture. But I would not recommend you start there - if you have not read it, I recommend starting with DeWitt, after which you will have the global view and then be in much better position to check this very detailed issue.

Also, SOME of the aspects of this issue are discussed [on my page here](#) but I have not succeeded in polishing that to the point it needs to be - it is currently more of a list of points rather than a good narrative argument.

Don't let my stopping at this point in the post discourage you. If you are motivated to pursue this there are many aspects to discuss and I would like nothing more than to follow along with you as you check these sources, and I am sure I would learn from discussing it with you as you go through. This is a tremendously important issue and far too few people are interested in it.