

An Epicurean Understanding of Pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of October 7, 2021 at 2:16 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

By definition, all pleasures are "good."

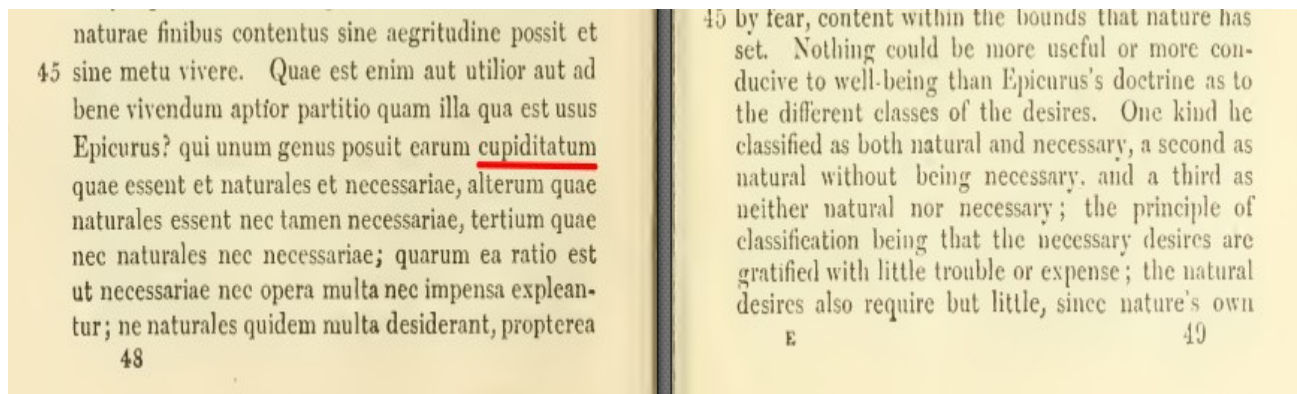
That part I think we are all together on, at least here in this forum. There are no "worthy" or "unworthy" pleasures -- all pleasures are pleasing because that is how they affect us.

As to the distinction between desire and pleasure, what do you think of this from Torquatus - Reid uses the term "passions":

[Quote from Cassius](#)

[45] I ask what classification is either more profitable or more suited to the life of happiness than that adopted by Epicurus? He affirmed that there is one class of passions which are both natural and needful; another class which are natural without being needful ; a third class which are neither natural nor needful; and such are the conditions of these passions that the needful class are satisfied without much trouble or expenditure ; nor is it much that the natural passions crave, since nature herself makes such wealth as will satisfy her both easy of access and moderate in amount; and it is not possible to discover any boundary or limit to false passions.

If Cicero got Torquatus right it appears we are talking cupiditatem but also desiderant:



And here is the line-by-line of Meneoecus from Epicurism.info:

Menoceus 127-128

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Ἀναλογιστέον δὲ ὡς τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσι φυσικαί, αἱ δὲ κεναί, καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν αἱ μὲν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ

One ought to bear in mind → that → among desires → some are natural → while (others are) vain and (that) → (among the) natural (ones) → some (are) necessary →

δὲ φυσικαί μόνου· τῶν δὲ ἀναγκαιῶν αἱ μὲν πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν εἰσὶν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος

while (others are) [only] natural (but unnecessary) → Of the → necessary (ones) → some → → are necessary [for happiness] → others for the → →

ἀοχλησίαν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν. τούτων γὰρ ἀπλανῆς θεωρία πᾶσαν αἴρεσιν καὶ φυγὴν

comfort [of the body] → while (others) for → → life [itself] → → (A) correct view [of these] (matters) → → → →

ἐπανάγειν οἶδεν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὑγίειαν καὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀταραξίαν, ἐπεὶ τοῦτο τοῦ

[knows] (how) to lead [every choice and avoidance] back → to the [health] of the body → and the [tranquility] of the soul → because; since; as this →

μακαρίως ζῆν ἔστι τέλος, τούτου γὰρ πάντα πράττομεν, ὅπως μῆτε ἀλγῶμεν μῆτε ταρβῶμεν. ὅταν δὲ ἅπαξ τοῦτο


→ → is (the) end-goal [of living blissfully] [For the sake of] this → → we do [everything] so that → we [neither] suffer pain nor anguish → → Once this

περὶ ἡμᾶς γένηται, λύεται πᾶς ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς χειμῶν, οὐκ ἔχοντος τοῦ ζῶου βαδίζειν ὡς πρὸς ἐνδέον

→ → happens [to us] → all [hardship] → of the soul [is relieved] → → → → (as) [the] living being [does not have] to go (any further) as if → (it were) missing

τι καὶ ζητεῖν ἕτερον ὧ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος ἀγαθὸν συμπληρώσεται. τότε γὰρ ἡδονῆς χρεῖαν

something and to seek (something) else by which the [well-being] of the soul and of the body → may be completed → because → [we] need [pleasure]

ἔχομεν, ὅταν ἐκ τοῦ μὴ παρῆναι τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀλγῶμεν· <ὅταν δὲ μὴ ἀλγῶμεν> οὐκέτι τῆς ἡδονῆς δεόμεθα. 

→ when → → → in its absence → → we suffer pain → while [when] → we suffer [no] pain [we] no longer [need] → pleasure →

Perseus has the Hicks version:

"We must also reflect that of desires some are natural, others are groundless ; and that of the natural some are necessary as well as natural, and some natural only. And of the necessary desires some are necessary if we are to be happy, some if the body is to be rid of uneasiness, some if we are even to live. [128] He who has a clear and certain understanding of these things will direct every preference and aversion toward securing health of body and tranquility of mind, seeing that this is the sum and end of a blessed life. For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear, and, when once we have attained all this, the tempest of the soul is laid ; seeing that the living creature has no need to go in search of something that is lacking, nor to look for anything else by which the good of the soul and of the body will be fulfilled. When we are pained because of the absence of pleasure, then, and then only, do we feel the need of pleasure. Wherefore we call pleasure the alpha and omega of a blessed life."