

Do Pigs Value Katastematic Pleasure? (Summer 2022 K / K Discussion)

Post by "Don" of July 11, 2022 at 11:36 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think the motivation of the "Wikipedians" is to reduce the types of pleasure to only those which are "approved" and that makes way for Platonic / Aristotelian categorization into "better or worse" pleasures.

I'm going to again stress that we're not dealing with a monolithic authoritarian editorial board of "Wikipedians." Each and every one of us has the ability to sign up for a free account and add content. Whether that's just External Links to pertinent papers on JSTOR or Academia or books, or actually adding prose edits in articles ***and backing them up with citations***, we can all do it. There's no barrier. I would have done it myself today but I was under the weather and took a sick day. My plan is to include some additional material directly in the katastematic article. It could use some bulking up.

What we're really dealing with here are people - the hoi polloi to use Epicurus's term - working under the influence of popular acculturation and academic indoctrination. They have not set sail in their own little boat, free from all indoctrination. The hoi polloi are not aware there's even a controversy. Although, I will admit there *may* be some Stoic or Platonic sympathizers selectively editing Wikipedia. Yet another reason to get an account, get on, and at least start providing some *referenced* counterpoints.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

"I've told you that "Pleasure" is the goal of life

I agree 100% with you. Why then, I ask, does Dewitt not want to just stop at saying this? Dewitt's whole "Epicurus didn't say pleasure was the greatest good. Life is the greatest good" is, in my opinion, an unnecessary obfuscation. When he writes in that paper Cassius posted today:

Quote

Pleasure Not the Greatest Good

IN SPITE of this teaching it was not the doctrine of Epicurus that pleasure was the greatest good. To his thinking the greatest good was life itself. This was a logical

deduction from the denial of immortality. Without the afterlife this present life becomes the concentration of all values. Pleasure, or happiness, has its place as the end, goal or fulfilment of living.

It was the Stoics and Cicero who concocted and publicized the false report that Epicurus counted pleasure as the greatest good. This is mistakenly asserted in all our handbooks.

I see nowhere in any of Epicurus's writings or any early adherents of the Garden to substantiate a phrase like "Life is the greatest good." At least Dewitt does say "pleasure is the end, goal or fulfilment of living." But that's what the "greatest good" is although he tries to jump through some hoops to say otherwise. (Dewitt tries to use VS42)

This wording bothered me in DeWitt's book and it bothers me here. It seems a milquetoast concession to an uneasiness to just saying "Pleasure is the Greatest Good. It is the thing to which all things point."

Even if someone wants to say Epicurus was using the philosophical terminology of the other schools in saying "the greatest good" (I think this was not the case and that Epicurus was genuinely saying 'pleasure is the greatest good') "Life" can't be the "greatest good" because our lives can't point to life. That's a tautology. Maybe "Living is a pleasure."? Ok, but yeah.

I'm sorry to bring up the rabbit hole again, but it bothers me. To my understanding, pleasure is the greatest "thing" to which we can aspire in our lives because everything we do ends with "Should I do this?" And we answer the question in the end "is it pleasurable or painful?" If you ask "is it virtuous?" you have to answer a whole set of other questions that finally boil down to "will this provide me with pleasure or pain?"

I find Dewitt's formulation of "Life is the greatest good" a tad nonsensical. Of course, life - living - is great and a good thing but it's great because it's the only thing we have! We exist now. After we exist, we do not exist. Non Fui, Fui, Non Sum, Non Curo. Yes PD2 says "[Death is nothing to us](#); for what has disintegrated lacks awareness, and what lacks awareness is nothing to us." Before we "disintegrate" we're alive, we're living, we're making choices and rejections, and that's great. That's a pleasurable thing to experience. But I'm not persuaded by his "no definite article in Latin" idea, not his saying the Stoics and Cicero are the ones responsible for "Pleasure is the greatest good" from what I've seen.

And I know this has been written and cited before by Cassius, so in the interest of fairness and to work on my citation habits:

File

[**Epicurus: The Summum Bonum Fallacy**](#)

