

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

Post by "Cassius" of July 13, 2022 at 9:08 AM

I didn't think we disagreed on that - so very good.

I keep coming back in my mind to one of the biggest challenges here being the over-restrictive definition of pleasure that we live under today.

It's almost as if people today think that if you aren't presently engaged in sex or drinking bouts or massages then you aren't experiencing pleasure, and they INSIST on separating out what we might call "intellectual" or "emotional" feelings of satisfaction and other "background feelings" as something other than "Pleasure."

I think that extended quote from DeWitt is right on point with this, and its something with which I think everyone here on the forum basically agrees: that if you feel ANYTHING at all (and we are constantly feeling lots of things as part of being alive) then those feelings are either (1) pleasure or (2) pain.

This isn't psychological babble based on Epicurus having an "ebullient" personality like a child or a puppy or cat who is "easily amused."

It's the foundational understanding about a universe in which there isn't a god to tell us what to do, and there aren't absolute ideal forms of right and wrong to go by. The only stop and go standard given us by nature is Feeling (pleasure and pain). All good and evil comes to us through sensation, meaning what we feel, and the realization that this is the true foundation of morality is such a huge "fight" to get people to understand and accept that all the rest can sort of fade into the background.

As DeWitt points out, it was apparently argued in the ancient world (and still is today) that Feeling/Pleasure-pain can't serve as the guide of life because it isn't always available -- sometimes we're just numb -- and to what do we look when we are just feeling numb?

That's a decent argument against looking to Pleasure as your ultimate guide, so Epicurus had to meet it. And I think it's a good argument to point out that there are an innumerable number of types of pleasures, and some or other are "always" available in life -- even if it's only closing your eyes and remembering good things from the past. But the "always" has to be put in quotes because there are times when pain becomes so sharp and overwhelming and with no hope of relief that you do in fact choose to "exit the stage" under those circumstances. Epicurean philosophy isn't magical and can't fix every problem - which is why you do work hard to plan ahead and set future goals (as you're saying) to work toward future pleasure even when

you're in a lot of pain.

And I feel confident that we should label that feeling that comes from looking ahead to future pleasure as - itself - a pleasure.

Maybe in the end Cicero realized the importance of this argument and that's why he shot so many barrages at it and tried to make it look ridiculous.