

Pleasure, Desire and Limits

Post by "Godfrey" of July 19, 2022 at 5:40 PM

This post was in my head before I read post #19, so it's not a reply but there's probably some overlap.

I've been stewing over where my thinking and posts on the desires are leading, and I'm beginning to form a conclusion. When a person is new to EP, they go through a process of working to understand the categories of desires. In so doing, they form a broad idea of how these apply in their life. Basically, what is natural and necessary for themselves, and what is pretty much out there for them so that it can reasonably be considered to be "unnatural", or causing unending distress for them.

After living with the philosophy for a while one no longer needs to give much thought to what for them is natural and necessary and what for them is unnatural and therefore unnecessary. At this point, where the rubber meets the road is in the day to day practice of choices and avoidances, and the majority of these would now constitute working with the category of natural and unnecessary desires. The big choices have been made.

This leads me to think that the critical category for the practicing Epicurean is natural and unnecessary. Practically speaking, how might I maximize my pleasure in doing a particular activity? Or is a particular activity something to pursue, or might it cause me unending distress. Take playing golf as an example. Personally, getting serious about golf would probably cause me great distress. But playing a non-competitive game with friends, in a spectacular natural setting, could be very pleasant.

Reaching a point where one has answered the big questions and is living in the "sweet spot" of working with natural and unnecessary desires sounds to me like the Epicurean "good life".

The philosophical implication of this is that the absence of pain crowd have made two category errors. The first is to confuse pleasure and desire, and the second is to focus on the natural and necessary category. Those living the philosophy are living in the natural and unnecessary category.