

Mental pleasure/pain more intense and longer lasting than physical pleasure/pain

Post by “Pacatus” of December 13, 2023 at 4:08 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

From my perspective, that is actually the point. Don't dismiss those weeds too lightly. Are you able or willing to admit to yourself that doing what you felt was "right" was pleasurable to you. Feeling that you did the correct action *was* pleasurable. If you want to say that doing what you felt was right brought you a sense of satisfaction, I can see that. But satisfaction is a type of pleasure in long run.

[Don](#) : And that is an example of choosing a particular mental pleasure as outweighing any pains that might be involved. ***Does the Stoic feel displeasure/dissatisfaction - or displeased/disgusted with herself - in following her virtue-ideals? I sincerely doubt it.*** That does not mean that she might not experience great suffering in the instance (even unto death).

But (as I think has already been mentioned) the articulable “why” for such choices may come after an innate (evolutionary) urge to which we are responding – based on our survival needs as largely social animals.

In the social context, it is difficult to maximize the chances of living a life of wellbeing without some sort of social compact to neither harm nor be harmed. We can argue over whether such choices are (or “should be”) made out of long-term personal interest or some categorically-commanded virtue-ideal (or some evolutionarily embedded feeling-response we might call conscience) – but Epicureanism is certainly (to my view) affirming of policies that would come under the headings of social justice or social wellbeing (which does not necessarily imply some simplistic utilitarian formula). And that means making choices that take into account the wellbeing of others (not of our particular group) – and a weighing of choices, just as in a personal hedonic calculus. Also, some goods are public goods (e.g., public health efforts to prevent the spread of infectious disease), such that denying them to someone else may well cause me harm/ill-being (e.g., I , or people I care about, do get infected).

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Of course, it's easy to sling judgments back and forth:

“You're not enough of a virtuous person if you think that way! You're just selfish – even when you're doing something for others!”

“And you’re deluded if you think you get no – at least a priori – satisfaction from your virtue claims! When was the last time you berated yourself for being so good?!”

“What do you mean I’m evolutionarily wired for certain virtues? I have free will!”

“And what about sadists?! And masochists?!”

And on and on and on ...  

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Myself when young did eagerly frequent

Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument

About it and about: but evermore

Came out by the same door where in I went.

- Edward FitzGerald: The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám; Fifth Edition, Quatrain XXVII

O, now to let those arguments go by

as I hear the call of a gentler band:

I offer wine and laughter ere we die -

and, if you need, a free and open hand.