

A Food Analogy That May Be Useful In Thinking About Stimulative vs Non-Stimulative Pleasures

Post by "Cassius" of March 6, 2024 at 9:53 AM

Epicurus gives an analogy in the Vatican Sayings that I'd like to speculate about:

VS37. Nature is weak toward evil, not toward good: because it is saved by pleasures, but destroyed by pains.

What I am about to say is far from a perfect analogy to VS37, but I think it might be meaningful for those of us who are constantly reading about health and diet. Unfortunately I don't have time for a long post with lots of cites so I will stick to what I think is strictly non-controversial.

1. In order to be strong, our bodies need energy.
2. Energy can come either from "carbohydrates" or "fat/protein."
3. Both sources of energy appear to have important uses.
4. The body stores fat/protein and burns fat/protein when carbohydrates are not present.
5. People can experience "sugar highs" from carbohydrates, but (unless I missed the article) there are rarely if ever "fat-highs or protein-highs."
6. It's obvious where this would go:
7. Stimulative pleasures analogize to our bodies burning the carbohydrates / sugars that we find so stimulative pleasing when we eat them.
8. Non-stimulative pleasures analogize to burning the stored fat/protein (fat first) in the body during which we can function just as well as from carbohydrates, but this energy arises from the natural healthy operation of our bodies. In fact it happens either through mentally sticking to a low-carb diet or simply not having the option of carbohydrates, and not from the stimulative addition of food in the form of the carbohydrates that we can find so addictive but also damaging if overused.
9. Both types of bodily processes (burning carbohydrate and burning fat/protein) are normal and natural and meet separate needs.
10. Carbohydrates in nature are not always available (in older times, mainly in spring and summer when fruits were available). Fats/proteins are "always" available, either through burning our stored excess fat/protein, or from killing and eating animals, which themselves store fat/protein.
11. Our natures are "saved by pleasures" but "destroyed by pains" analogizes to that we need pleasure like energy from food. Pleasure can come from stimulative or non-stimulative pleasures, and energy can come from burning carbohydrates or it can come from burning fat/protein. The selection between the two is largely a matter of circumstances and keeping the two options in a balance that leads the body as a whole to be healthy and strong.

12. No reasonable person thinks that carbohydrates are "bad in themselves" unless they are misused. No rational person thinks that fat or protein are "superior" forms of energy in themselves, because there are many benefits from consuming foods that contain both.
13. No reasonable person would argue that carbohydrates are included under the term "food" but that fat/protein is not, nor would they argue the reverse, or that the term "food" contains only one type or the other. Both types are food, just like both types of pleasure are pleasure.
14. No reasonable person thinks that we consume carbohydrates because the "goal" of our bodies is to produce fat and protein. Likewise, no reasonable person should think that "stimulative" pleasures are in themselves better or worse than "non-stimulative pleasures. Both are required for healthy living.
15. The goal of our bodies is to live a healthy life, which requires a healthy total relationship between carbohydrates and fat and protein. The goal of a philosophically-correct person is to live a happy life, which requires that pleasures are always found to be available either from stimulative or non-stimulative sources, adding up to a total picture in which pleasures predominate over total pains.