

Why isn't "satisfaction" the guide of life?

Post by "Cassius" of December 15, 2024 at 8:54 PM

[Quote from Julia](#)

Isn't aiming for satisfaction going to result in the maximum pleasure?

It won't if you consciously lower your desires so that they are satisfied, but those desires are less than you could have achieved if you set your sights higher and pursued what you were capable of achieving. This is the problem of the ascetic view -- the best way to achieve no pleasure is not to try for any.

Of course, i wouldn't say that it's illegitimate by nature to set your goals low and work to achieve them so you can say that you are "satisfied." There's no way by nature to say that that's wrong, as it could give that type of person 100% pleasure if they lower their sights and also experience no pain. But many people, and I would say most people, would look at the missed opportunity of pleasures that could have been achieved at a reasonable cost in pain and have regret - a form of pain - that they did not use their lives more aggressively.

So this points out to me that when Epicurus was talking about the concept of absence of pain, he was talking about a concept first and foremost. [PD09](#) talks about how pleasures can differ in duration, location of the body, and intensity. That's a different perspective than simply saying "I have pure pleasure because I have no pain." I think Torquatus' explanation makes clear that saying that your pleasure is undiluted by pain, which makes it the "highest" pleasure, doesn't answer the question of exactly *what* you should be doing with your time.

Every person has to answer what they want to do with their time for themselves, but as for my view of what's possible to me in what time I have, I am going to pursue "the greatest pleasure" possible to me, even if there is a mixture of pain involved, and I am not going to consider "the greatest pleasure" to be achievable by lowering my activities to a bare minimum so I can say I achieved them and i am therefore "satisfied."

Yes I'd like to say that I satisfied my goal of achieving the greatest pleasure possible to me, but I would not sacrifice the attainment of many of them simply because I may not succeed in attaining "all" of them.

That's the kind of problem I would see with placing "satisfaction" as either my goal or my guide.

[Quote from Julia](#)

If one specific pleasure is the indicator of how well I compute and follow through with hedonic calculus, then doesn't that specific pleasure become my guide (towards maximising the net sum of all pleasure, which is still my goal)?

I would say 'yes" to this question, but that's exactly why I would not let the pleasure of "satisfaction" -- which is a pleasure, no doubt --- be my guide. Yes I would like to say at my time of departure that I am satisfied, but paradoxically I don't think it would be possible for me to say at the end that I was satisfied if I had set "being satisfied" as my guide all along the way. That role belongs to "pleasure," which has many other very valuable facets besides "satisfaction."

This is a good exchange of ideas on an important topic.