

The Difference Between Happiness and Pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of January 13, 2018 at 8:13 PM

Absolutely! Brett have you read the [extended narrative by Torquatus in support of Epicurus in Cicero's ON ENDS](#)? You may not have got to that yet. This point is explained there, and of course in [Epicurus' letter to Menoeceus](#):

Torquatus:

"On the other hand, we denounce with righteous indignation and dislike men who are so beguiled and demoralized by the charms of the pleasure of the moment, so blinded by desire, that they cannot foresee the pain and trouble that are bound to ensue. Equal blame belongs to those who fail in their duty through weakness of will, which is the same as saying through shrinking from toil and pain. These cases are perfectly simple and easy to distinguish. In a free hour, when our power of choice is untrammelled and when nothing prevents our being able to do what we like best, every pleasure is to be welcomed and every pain avoided. **But in certain circumstances and owing to the claims of duty or the obligations of business it will frequently occur that pleasures have to be repudiated and annoyances accepted. The wise man therefore always holds in these matters to this principle of selection: he rejects pleasures to secure other greater pleasures, or else he endures pains to avoid worse pains.**"

And of course the letter to Menoeceus:

And since pleasure is the first good and natural to us, for this very reason we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them: **and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time.** Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided. Yet by a scale of comparison and by the consideration of advantages and disadvantages we must form our judgment on all these matters. For the good on certain occasions we treat as bad, and conversely the bad as good.

Your calculation tradeoff is exactly right IMO.

Also as to "Sure, I didn't NEED to undertake this enterprise, certainly not a necessary or really natural need, but it was something that i loved doing and added pleasure to my life.."

That is the other question I find myself often debating on the forum, the meaning of "natural and necessary." That also is addressed in Torquatus, but people still argue that the rule is that ONLY necessary desires (which by definition would be natural) should be pursued.

I think your answer is absolutely the correct one, and that's my position, but this is like "absence of pain" that you have to look at the big picture and not "autistically" apply a passage out of context. I argue the good evidence comes from the fact that passages that discuss natural and necessary never explicitly say necessary only, and they never list any examples (if Epicurus had said "drink water and eat bread only!" that would defeat our point, but he never said that). Further in the letter to Menoeceus Epicurus explicitly explained that the point of living simply is to be independent, and that luxury can be ok if we aren't dependent on it. We also have Torquatus saying:

"Pleasure and pain moreover supply the motives of pleasure and of the principles of desire and of avoidance, and the springs of conduct generally. This being so, it clearly follows that actions are right and praiseworthy only as being a means to the attainment of a life of pleasure. But that which is not itself a means to anything else, but to which all else is a means, is what the Greeks term the Telos, the highest, ultimate or final Good. It must therefore be admitted that the Chief Good is to live agreeably."

And:

"Here is indeed a royal road to happiness -- open, simple, and direct! For clearly man can have no greater good than complete freedom from pain and sorrow coupled with the enjoyment of the highest bodily and mental pleasures. --- NOTE THE "COUPLED" -- he is saying that the two are different, and that simply stating "absence of pain" does not define the other completely

And there are many other arguments.... but even with these I think the position you are taking is clearly the correct one.