

Glossary - What is the Epicurean Definition of "Pleasure?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 9:46 PM

Yes I am convinced that is the main point Mike. I know we are hitting you with a lot of material in terms of the DeWitt book and now these other articles such as [Nikolsky](#), and I presume you have a life outside this philosophy work, plus you have to worry about a volcano!

But over time I hope you will keep an eye on this particular issue. It's something we are going to face with every new person who comes down the road, because the mainline summaries of Epicurus are so focused on this point. It is the strategy they use to back up their argument that Epicurus was not REALLY a hedonist after all, because what he really advocated was this "fancy pleasure" which really isn't pleasure as ordinary people understand it at all.

DeWitt actually does not deal with it a lot, primarily i think because - since he was so systematic in approaching first through the physics and the epistemology - he wasn't sidetracked on something that would never occur to a "normal person" to be an issue. When you are grounded first in the natural order of things, that pleasure guides all life, as illustrated in the opening of Lucetius, the person of common understanding would never naturally go off into exploring some ineffable "nothingness" as a legitimate form of pleasure, and certainly not the "highest pleasure."

But the seeds of this argument were planted centuries ago, at least as far back as Cicero, and now it is the standard way used to explain what Epicurus was supposedly all about. The ancient Stoics and Epicureans didn't think that way, because they fought to the end, but the argument has gained a lot of steam in more recent centuries because Stoicism has achieved such a sweeping victory that people are afraid of emotion, afraid of pleasure, and do all they can to explain the viewpoint away. Such things are good enough to be the guide of all OTHER forms of life, but not humans -- no not humans! -- because we are the "rational animal" and we are "better" than that! (I am being sarcastic, of course)