

All Pleasure Is Desirable, Because It Is Pleasing To Us, But Is All Pleasure *Equally* Desirable?

Post by "Pivot" of May 11, 2018 at 1:29 PM

Daniel, I am incredibly sorry I did not mention this in my post, but the entirety of my post was a direct response to Cassius' numerated reply to my previous post. All of the "you's" and "yours" would have been addressed to Cassius there.

I do not think I have a disagreement with any of the ideas in your previous post (the one before last), except the claim that your perspective goes against PD3.

If one accepts the view that the natural and necessary pleasures are the only sort which should be actively toiled for, then one is able to make sense of PD3 (while also keeping that freedom from pain is not directly proportional to pleasure). Pursuing natural but unnecessary desires is only beneficial to do in intervals, and while it will increase our pleasure, it does not increase our overall *net* pleasure. That is what I believe PD3 is saying. "The magnitude of pleasure..." where pleasure is net pleasure in one's life. I do not believe Epicurus means the magnitude of an INDIVIDUAL pleasure. There is a hedonist principle called the "hedonist treadmill," which is "the tendency of humans to quickly return to a relatively stable level of happiness despite major positive or negative events or life changes." That is along what I was attempting to say, that our baseline for freedom from pain will adjust if we continually pursue natural but unnecessary desires.

I agree with you that Epicurus was not against *having* much, but I believe he was against actively toiling for more than is necessary for one's freedom from pain. Those things which are natural but unnecessary should be enjoyed if they come to you, but not constantly sought, because 1) fortune is fickle, and 2) in attaining these pleasures through pain, we become acclimated to them and no longer enjoy them as pleasures.

In response to your statement: "As long as one fully appreciates having much in some pleasure (a fine taste to enjoy costly meals or a love of big TV screens or a personal library full of enjoyable literature), I think Epicurus would have been fine with them enjoying much."

Enjoying much is different from seeking for much in my opinion. If you win the lottery and are able to eat a lobster and steak every day at the finest restaurant, indeed you should enjoy this pleasure, but it is of the natural and unnecessary sort. The money has come to you and therefore Epicurus would not oppose you allowing those luxuries which result to wash over you. However, after enough time eating this fine dinner every day, it will become the baseline, and will no longer be enjoyed as pleasure. It will become necessary maintenance for freedom from pain.

That is why these unnecessary things should be pursued only in intervals. That is the only way to ensure maximum pleasure. From Diogenes Laertius on Epicurus:

"In his correspondence he himself mentions that he was content with plain bread and water. And again : 'Send me a little pot of cheese, that, when I like, I may fare sumptuously.' Such was the man who laid down that pleasure was the end of life. And here is the epigram in which Athenaeus eulogizes him :

Ye toil, O men, for paltry things and incessantly begin strife and war for gain ; but nature's wealth extends to a moderate bound, whereas vain judgements have a limitless range. This message Neocles' wise son heard from the Muses or from the sacred tripod at Delphi."