

Visualizing Principal Doctrine Three

Post by "Godfrey" of December 27, 2021 at 1:10 AM

[Quote from camotero](#)

So, it would seem as if pleasure exists as a function of pain.

This is incorrect. Pleasure and pain are more accurately thought of as dichotomous or binary; perhaps better still as part of an affective circumplex as discussed elsewhere on the forum. Most importantly though, they are the two components of the faculty of Feelings, and this faculty serves as a guiding function. As Cassius points out, PD3 is a response to the argument of rival philosophers that pleasure can't be the *telos* because it has no limit. Epicurus in PD3 gives that limit. The mistake that people make is to interpret this *philosophical argument* (which it is) as *practical advice* (which it isn't).

Quote from camotero

~~...it could be smart to learn what pains are they eliminating, for us to gain more control and understanding over our experience. Going psychological here, if there's a pleasure I constantly seek and indulge in (which is, as accepted before, eliminating some pain) but that overall ends up producing me more pain afterwards (think addiction), it would make sense go try and find what is that non evident pain (most likely mental distress) **or the vain desire** that I'm eliminating with the pleasure, thus becoming capable of eliminating the vicious cycle in a reasonable manner consistent with the philosophy, rather than brute-forcing yourself out of it without addressing the root cause. What do you think?~~

I think that what you're describing here is important as it is one aspect of the guiding function (noting that I've struck out some of the quote and added a bit). But you must also be aware of pleasures which are giving you positive guidance, and the niggling unnoticed pains that are by themselves giving negative guidance, as well as vain desires that are contributing to your pain. Following pleasure generally leads toward health and growth, following pain generally leads toward disease and atrophy. But the above edited quote is a good example of the fact that while all pleasures are "good", not all are to be chosen as per the Letter to Menoikeus. And also that ignoring pain is ignoring the guidance of the Feelings. For me, a big part of living this philosophy is being aware, as often as I'm able, of my feelings of pleasure and pain and listening to and evaluating the guidance that they're giving me. But I can't by any means claim to have mastered this!