

Atlantic article about enjoyment vs. pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of May 3, 2022 at 7:11 AM

I don't think that there is anything more important in the way Epicurus was presenting the issues than to emphasize that he was including *everything* that feels good in any way at all (physically, mentally, emotionally, or any word we might choose to use) under the term "pleasure."

That's the way you get around the constant temptation to rank some good feelings as *better* than others.

Of course the other issue is that indulging in some pleasures in some contexts will bring more pain than pleasure, but that's a contextual issue and different people will answer differently how much pain should be accepted for a particular pleasure.

The pain calculation is a "practical" consideration that varies by person and context, but the decision to include *everything* that we find feels good under the term "pleasure" (rather than insist on 50 different terms) is - to me - definitional and philosophical.

And it is something that is not at all clear to everyone, and needs to be explained.

If you want to maintain that all pleasure is good, as Epicurus did, even though every pleasure is not to be chosen at all times, then you are making a sweeping statement ("all pleasure is good") which does not allow of any exceptions. So if you start ranking some as more good or less good, then you're not following Epicurus' own analysis.

"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."
(letter to Menoeceus)