

# Atlantic article about enjoyment vs. pleasure

Post by “reneliza” of May 3, 2022 at 9:52 PM

I did start reading DeWitt today! (I haven't read the Nietzsche)

I haven't even read the letter to Menoeceus yet because I was waiting to have a little bit better foundations...but then this thread popped up and I couldn't help but ask haha

So I have a degree in neuroscience (which does contribute to my understanding that the mind/soul are of nature) and that's where a lot of my curiosity comes from. A person with perfectly functioning eyes and optic nerves with occipital lobe damage that leaves them blind would be unable to experience visual pleasure. But then there's all kinds of other brain weirdness where we may have awareness of something but not be aware that we are aware (or at least we may be partially unaware of our awareness - seen in split brain experiments).

I didn't really realize this when I first posted earlier today, but I think my question stems from my own background of anxiety and depression leading to regular dissociation in avoidance of everyday pains (which of course in turn also made me unaware of everyday *pleasures*, and sometimes even more luxurious pleasures like a bowl of ice cream eaten while doomscrolling.)

Is pleasure still pleasurable if not appreciated by the mind?

I think this goes to what Kalosyni said about the Epicurean definition of pleasure, if I understand them. A year ago I would've thought that pleasure is just good feeling, and that whether or not I paid attention to it didn't really make any difference. But if I understand correctly, pleasure is enjoyment is happiness, so this whole article is unnecessary. Except that a lot of people DO misunderstand what is meant as pleasure, so the overall point in the article could be useful even though it's expressed very poorly.

Although I've had many "pleasures" in life (honestly it has never occurred to me to think of pleasure as bad so that wouldn't be a risk for me) I *haven't experienced very much pleasure* due to repeated distraction.

In other words, I haven't had much *enjoyment* and the pleasures have been hollow not because there's anything wrong with pleasure - or because of "higher" or "lower" forms of pleasure, but just because I haven't given them enough attention to appreciate them. The sensual experience of eating a bowl of ice cream holds very little pleasure for me if I don't also have a mental appreciation of the experience. (this is my experience)

Even though I've only started learning about Epicureanism in the past week, I've started doing this - to stop and smell the roses as people say - for the last few months and it has vastly

improved my enjoyment of life in general and most things in it. It has even drastically reduced my anxiety and depression so that the overall everyday pain is far less and therefore it's less tempting to cover it up in the first place unless I'll actually get some pleasure by the cover itself. So I will continue to indulge (though ideally not overindulge) in pleasure, but with an emphasis on experiencing and truly enjoying that pleasure.

I get the impression based on other replies here that the Epicurean take is that that enjoyment IS pleasure and so the Atlantic article is silly for trying to demonize pleasure (I agree) while encouraging enjoyment which is itself pleasure - the thing they were just demonizing. My point is only that a year ago I would've told you that I had all kinds of pleasure in my life - but I really did need the reminder *to actually enjoy things instead of mindlessly consuming*, and in the world we live in I think a LOT of people do (although, preferably without the suggestion that we eschew pleasure which doesn't even make sense in context).

That was a lot of words to say the same thing in a lot of different ways in the hopes that one of them adequately conveys what I'm trying to say 😊 I think I'm coming upon something more, but I'll wait until I've read more and have a deeper understanding of Epicurus's original teachings