

Atlantic article about enjoyment vs. pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of May 4, 2022 at 7:18 AM

[Quote from reneliza](#)

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

Somehow I missed reading this post at the time it was posted - maybe we crossposted.

So it looks like I better address another fundamental point about this "what is pleasure?" discussion:

ReneLisa I see your perspective as intersecting with Kalosyni's recent post about REBT / CBT and therapy, and i think my comments in that thread apply here too. [Is Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy Compatible with Epicureanism?](#)

In my view, Epicurean views need to be thought of first as a "philosophy" of life - a world view. Yes Epicurean philosophy is practical, and yes it will lead in many practical directions, but Epicurean philosophy is not first and foremost a "therapy" as modern Stoicism has become.

My point here is that Epicurus' discussions about "pleasure" are - in my view - primarily tuned to addressing some basic philosophic questions. Epicurus is starting by asking "What is the nature of human life?" and "What is the goal of human life?" -- big picture items like those. In that field, the big alternatives argued by others are (1) Being pious (following god/religion like the priests tell you), or (2) Being "rational" (following "reason" or "logic" like Plato or Aristotle or Mr Spock might tell you), or (3) Being "virtuous" or being "a good person" (like the Stoics or fundamental "Humanists" might tell you). I am sure there are other major categories too.

I think that's the first way you have to understand Epicurus. When he says things to the effect that "pleasure is the goal of life" he's contrasting that conclusion to (1), (2), or (3) above. He's not prescribing a medication or giving precise clinical advice for particular person to follow at a particular moment.

AFTER you reject (1), (2), and (3) and realize why they are wrong (for reasons such as there is no "supernatural god" and no "fate" and no "afterlife" and the other things that go with the Epicurean worldview), then you're in a position to understand your basic place in the universe and the general direction you should be heading. And at that point you're equipped to identify and call in all the appropriate "therapeutic techniques" that might help someone in your personal situation to work through your current problems and move in the direction you want to

go.

I just see the need to caution people that when they compare CBT or any "therapy" to Epicurean philosophy there's a hazard of making the mistake of comparing apples to oranges - they are very different things. To me, it would never make any sense to engage in any "therapy" without first having an idea of the meaning of "health" and where you need to be. That's what Epicurean philosophy provides -- an understanding of "health." Once you have that only then are you in a position to judge what particular medicine a particular person needs at a particular moment.