

Atlantic article about enjoyment vs. pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of May 4, 2022 at 12:58 PM

I forgot a couple of very basic points that I should have included in what I posted earlier in this thread:

Maybe the most important aspect of the value of Epicurean philosophy is that it addresses the question of whether living happily is even *possible*!

If you believe that an arbitrary and capricious god is lurking behind every corner to punish you, then it is not going to be possible for you to live as happily as you could otherwise.

If you believe that you're going to burn in hell, or miss out on heaven, depending on whether you follow an arbitrary set of rules that you can't really live up to, then then it is not going to be possible for you to live as happily as you could otherwise.

If you think there are absolute standards written in the stars to which you have to conform, but don't want to conform to, then then it is not going to be possible for you to live as happily as you could otherwise.

If you think that there is a "Fate" the guarantees that you're going to be unhappy, then then it is not going to be possible for you to live as happily as you could otherwise.

If you think that your mind is a billiard ball and that every thought and action you take have been predetermined from the beginning of time, and that nothing you choose to do yourself can have any impact on your future to change it for the better, then then it is not going to be possible for you to live as happily as you could otherwise.

If you think that the atomic flux moves so fast that there's no way you can ever grasp with confidence anything going on around you, then then it is not going to be possible for you to live as happily as you could otherwise.

If you think that your senses are hopelessly inadequate to the task of determining anything with confidence, then then it is not going to be possible for you to live as happily as you could otherwise.

If you think that no knowledge of any kind is possible on any subject, no matter how close to you or important to you, then then it is not going to be possible for you to live as happily as you could otherwise.

If you think that pain is such a huge part of normal life that it overwhelms you, and that the best you can do is grasp scraps of happiness that last for only moments amid long expanses of agony, then then it is not going to be possible for you to live as happily as you could otherwise.

I bet I have missed some big ones in that list, but that's why we start at the principles of the "Epicurean Worldview" and then move to applications of these principles to our individual circumstances.

To close out this post we need to remember too that "possible" does not mean "guaranteed." It's also possible in life that you get struck by lightning, or a meteor, or a drunk driver, or cancer -- there are many things that are in fact beyond your control, so it is not in the power of any philosophy - even Epicurus - to *guarantee* a long and happy life.

But better by far than any other worldview or system, I like the odds of success that come from following Epicurus' views on how to tackle the issue of happiness and go after it.