Episode One Hundred Thirty Eight - Letter to Menoeceus 5 - Pleasure Part One

Post by “reneliza” of September 8, 2022 at 9:36 AM

> Quote from Godfrey
>
> If desire is a pain, then per PD03 the limit of the magnitude of pleasure would include the removal of all desire. Is this what Epicurus had in mind? Then why would he describe natural and necessary desires? Does he say somewhere that gods have no desires?

I would think that the pain-free ideal would be to remove all desire by meeting all desire. So the only ones that would need to be dealt with would be the ones that can't be satisfied. (or that can't be satisfied while also satisfying desires of greater importance to you)

However, it's not like all desires are being actively desired at all times, so one can certainly reach a pain-free state even with unmet desires.

> Quote from Godfrey
>
> As I recall from an experiment described in the book Dopamine Nation, rats with their dopamine blocked would starve to death. They weren't motivated by the pleasure of food or by the removal of the pain of hunger, but by dopamine. So if dopamine equates to desire (does it?) then it would clearly not be a pain or a pleasure. Desire would be a stimulus to action as opposed to pleasure and pain, which serve as guides to action and results of action. (OK I'm mixing modern and ancient here)

It's important to be really careful when talking about DA in the context of motivation because it does a lot of different things, but of course gets presented in popular media as neurochemical pleasure which is a gross misrepresentation. For example: the only disorder for which the standard course of treatment includes synthetic dopamine is Parkinson's Disease. It is dysregulated in some way in just about all mental health conditions, and current understanding is basically that it fills a lot of different roles in a lot of different circuits and we're not sure of the exact mechanism. (Some animal models for ADHD include subjects with blocked DA to simulate loss of motivation, but subjects with increased DA activity to simulate hyperactivity are ALSO used)

Anyway, I found the paper referred to here, or at least a similar one studying DA-knockout rats which states (emphasis mine) "The feeding deficit in the rat model has been attributed to **sensorimotor impairment and/or a loss of motivation to eat; however, the mechanisms have not been elucidated**. Delivery of DA agonists and antagonists to different

sites in the brain has identified specific regions that influence feeding behaviors (8, 9), but they have not indicated where the DA action is essential. Furthermore, the genetic approach of inactivating individual genes encoding DA receptors or transporters has not revealed any striking effects on feeding behavior (10–13). Thus, the specific roles of DA in feeding remain enigmatic." https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC18425/