

Episode One Hundred Thirty-Nine - The Letter to Menoecus 06 - Pleasure Part Two

Post by "Don" of September 13, 2022 at 11:51 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

The reason for the question is to harl back to the debate on "katastematic pleasure", which may may not be related to tranquility, and to ask whether indeed either or both of those terms is in fact a "sensual pleasure" at all. (This question is the theme of the Wentham essay in our files section.)

There is a question as to whether it is indeed "sensual pleasure" which establishes how Epicurus recognizes the good, and whether "absence of pain" describes an identifiable sensual pleasure itself, or whether it describes instead a condition in which other / sensual pleasures are experienced without any mixture of pain or disruption.

Thanks for that clarification, and *mea culpa* for not addressing your response earlier!

[Quote from Cassius](#)

the debate on "katastematic pleasure", which may may not be related to tranquility

To that, I would say there doesn't seem to be much a debate to me. "Tranquility" = ataraxia = katastematic pleasure. Tranquility is usual/often translation of "ataraxia" which is specifically listed as a katastematic pleasure.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

to ask whether indeed either or both of those terms is in fact a "sensual pleasure" at all

I'll admit I haven't read Wenham yet, but to your specific question there, I'd have to point back to:

"[Death is nothing to us](#), for that which is dissolved into its elements is without consciousness / sensations / perception, and that which is without consciousness / sensations / perception is nothing to us."

Above being a statement of why to be free from the fear of death, I think PD2 is also a retort to the Cyrenaics: "Pleasure and pain are both 'movements,' according to the Cyrenaics: pleasure a smooth motion, and pain a rough motion. The absence of either type of motion is an intermediate state which is neither pleasurable nor painful. This is directed against Epicurus'

theory that the homeostatic state of being free of pain, need and worry is itself most pleasant. The Cyrenaics make fun of the Epicurean theory by saying that this state of being free of desires and pain is the condition of a corpse." ([Source](#)) (NOTE: The commentator here says "this state of being free of desires and pain" but I don't believe Epicurus said a "state of being free from desire" but free from disturbance. They're NOT the same thing.)

Once Epicurus posited that there was no "neutral state," he had to basically say that any pleasure MUST be "sensual" in the sense (no pun intended) that it is sensed, it is perceived, that we are conscious of it. I don't think there can be such a thing as a *non-sensual* pleasure. It's an oxymoron. What would that even mean? Even if it is a pleasant memory, we *feel* the pleasure of the memory.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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Again, I think that "absence of pain" is something that is sensed but it doesn't arise from outside influences or causes. It is something felt "from inside." Felt. Sensed. Aponia "No pain" is a "state" or "condition" in which one feels untroubled in the body. Aponia and ataraxia are "things" felt in and of themselves, as much as joy (khara) and mirth/ good cheer (euphrosyne).