

Perspectives On "Proving" That Pleasure is "The Good"

Post by "Todd" of December 22, 2022 at 5:49 PM

If anyone still cares to take this up, I will re-state my proposition that pleasure is not a good. And I'll take it all the way back to the physics and canon, so the whole thing is laid out to be picked apart.

1) There is no such thing as a good (or a bad) in nature. The concept of a good is a product of human reason. So first we need to define what a good is (or stop talking about them).

2) How would we define a good, using only the tools nature gave us? Pleasure and pain seem like the obvious tools for the job.

Aside: maybe you would like to use anticipations for this job. I can't say that is wrong, exactly, but it does not seem like an approach that is likely to be persuasive to others (~~because how could you ever falsify an anticipation?~~). Also, last I checked, we didn't even have a solid understanding of what Epicurus meant by anticipations. But I would have no problem if anyone wanted to say that anticipations point us in the same general direction.

3) A good, then, is something that produces pleasure. Producing pleasure is not just a property that goods happen to have. It is the very standard by which we are able to say they are goods at all. It is the ONLY property of a good, as such. Everything that has this property is a good. Nothing that lacks this property is a good.

4) So is pleasure a good? Does it produce pleasure? No, it IS pleasure. Therefore, it is not a good.

That's the main point.

If you want to continue into the weeds...

Don suggested an idea earlier, that there is a category called Goods that includes pleasure and a sub-category called Instrumental Goods. (A Venn diagram would be handy here.)

That seems internally consistent, in that Instrumental Goods and pleasure are clearly differentiated. But I would still reject it, because the meaning of the super-category Goods has been left undefined. How would you define it? It seems like an unnecessary concept.

Pleasure and goods do not share any properties, in my view (see #3 above). They are of course closely related. But they are different things, and should not be treated as similars.

To belabor the point (no one is obligated to keep reading). It's like you have a category "Yellow" that includes both the color yellow, and Things that are Yellow. Those are not similar things. Related, obviously. Not the same.