

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

Post by "Don" of December 22, 2022 at 7:37 PM

[Todd](#) That summary was very helpful to get us back on track and to clearly present your position. Thank you! I am taking pleasure in this discussion, and hope I've engaged in a respectful manner.

Of course, I have thoughts 😊 ...

[Quote from Todd](#)

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).

I would agree that humans are the ones to assign concepts to natural phenomena. That said, from the human perspective, there are good things and bad things in nature with respect to their effect on humans. And I'm consciously using "good thing" and "bad thing" not the platonic sounding "good" and "bad."

[Quote from Todd](#)

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.

I found the LSJ definition of ἀγαθός instructive in that it used words like benefit to define the word. A "good thing" provides a benefit of service. That's why other schools can say virtue or reason are "good things." For Epicureans, a good thing is that which leads to pleasure. Likewise, a bad thing produces pain.

[Quote from Todd](#)

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.

I *think* I agree with that. I'll admit I'm still parsing that paragraph. There's a lot going on in there.

[Quote from Todd](#)

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

That's an interesting question. I still maintain that pleasure is that to which all goods point, or, to be more exact to my thinking, pleasure is the ultimate motivation underpinning all...

Hmmm. That's not right. Hmmm, I'm going to have to cogitate on this a little more.

It remains a fact that Epicurus used the word "good" and "the good." It behooves is to understand why.

[Quote from Todd](#)

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.)

Well, I have to share thoughts on that 😊 Now I'm not so sure on that, but as I said above, those are Epicurus's words (well, not instrumental. I'm going to have to dig a little more on this one).

It seems my action item is to define "good" if I want to stay the course on that topic. Stay tuned.