

Is pleasure as the natural goal of life falsifiable?

Post by "Cassius" of February 7, 2023 at 1:18 PM

[Quote from A Gardner](#)

That said, an argument against propping up pleasure as the only good in life, is that it can lead to more states of psychological unrest, as pleasure is never a guaranteed and we often faces forms of hardship

Yes it certainly can..... and

[Quote from A Gardner](#)

Can it be argued here that ataraxia is more difficult to obtain/ maintain when faced under the duress of pain?

Yes it certainly can..... and

Both of the questions are exactly why I think it is such a terrible fallacy to accept the consensus view that "tranquility" or even "ataraxia" (which I think is best to translate into English and call it for what it is - "absence of disturbance") is the Epicurean goal of life!

Not shouting at you here but this gives me another opportunity to get out the soapbox:

Of COURSE pleasure is not guaranteed, and OF COURSE we should feel psychological unrest if we run into obstacles to pleasure that we can do something about, which is the case of many or most of them. Should we just crawl into a hole and die and say "Oh me oh my I could have been so happy today but it's raining, and the noise outside is loud, and I have a headache which I could fix with an aspirin but i don't want to take it." You can't stop the rain but you can have fun inside; you can't fix all the noise but you can close the windows or put on mufflers; you can fix the headache with an aspirin! And if you DON'T do those things then you should thank your lucky stars that you DO have psychological unrest rather than having been made in the image of a Stoic god and being indifferent to everything!

Same answer as to absence of disturbance. If you wake up to find that you have fallen asleep on railroad tracks, or that there's a tornado bearing down on your house, you better hope that you disturbed! You better hope you are **not** "tranquil" or so "calm" that you can't muster every bit of excitement and energy and determination and even anxiety that you can muster, and get to safety as quickly as you can!

That's the problem with defining tranquility and ataraxia as the goal of life. They AREN'T. Epicurus said it correctly over and over, the goal is PLEASURE, and in the service of pleasure,

which any normal human being knows requires work to obtain, you sometime accept and even choose and welcome pain, if it helps you achieve greater pleasure.

It's not Epicurus who put these advocates of "tranquility and ataraxia and absence of pain above all" people on the wrong track, in my view. It is the intentional misrepresentation - by taking out of the context of the rest of the philosophy - of a few sentences in the letter to Menoecus. Those passages have an absolutely clear interpretation that is totally consistent with the rest of the philosophy when taken as a whole, but a series of anti-Epicureans like Cicero and Plutarch began the process of defamation by mischaracterizing Epicurus as a sluggard and a retiring wallflower who would never tolerate a moment of pain. Then - after the first generations of defamers passed away along with the remaining Epicurean texts and teachers who could explain the situation properly, another 2000 years of pro-Stoic and anti-Epicurean writers (some innocent and some not) have come along to bury the "Pleasure is the goal" message in a bunch of pro-Stoic rewriting of the original message to change its message entirely.

I am so glad you came back to make that comment, and to make it in that way!

This is the number one problem that holds back Epicurean philosophy in the world today.