

Imagery On The Interplay Between "Pursue Pleasure" and 'Avoid Pain'

Post by "Cassius" of March 28, 2023 at 2:18 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Epicurus could say each person chooses their own pleasure, but he was not above saying that this or that choice would not end well and guiding someone to make a "better" choice.

I agree with that - it's kind of like the comments Emily Austin makes about the differences in being a philosopher vs a "life coach." Life coaches better have a philosophy or they won't be making much sense with their advice. But even the best life coaches are dependent on what their students really want to do. "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink." No matter how much we think that the choice for the other person is "better," it's ultimately up to them what they choose to do.

And it's also interesting to think that this relates to the other issue that Epicurus was so strong on - determinism. There would be nothing so dispiriting and discouraging than to give in to the idea that we *don't* have the choice about what to do with our lives.

But even as we debate this practical angle, the ultimate philosophical point remains and I think we all agree on it -- that in the end life is a balance between pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain, but while we sometimes choose pain in order to pursue pleasure, we never set "avoiding pain" as the primary overriding purpose of life.

So that's the reason that this thread is important: as a philosophic matter the starting point is the overall focus of life, and what gives it whatever enjoyment and meaning it has, is "pleasure" and not "avoiding pain."