

Episode 195 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 05

Post by "Cassius" of October 9, 2023 at 6:17 PM

Another key question, Godfrey:

If "pleasure" = "absence of pain," does that mean that all pleasures are the same, and it makes no difference to us which pleasures we experience in life?

My answer would be:

Of course it does NOT mean that!

Pleasures (and pains) differ in intensity, duration, and location. Cites for that proposition would include [PD09](#) + the common experience of everyone.

The pleasures of sitting on the floor of a cave chanting to yourself are quite different from the pleasures of flying to the moon in a rocket with your best pals.

No one with any degree of intelligence would allege that those pleasures are the same, but no one has the inherent authority to substitute their judgement of what is pleasing for those of another person. Some people may in fact find their ultimate fulfillment in life in sitting in a cave chanting. I am not such a person, and I doubt most of us in this forum are such people either. If we don't make more of our lives than that, then we will feel psychological pain of missing out on pleasure that was within our reach at reasonable cost but which we failed to seize.

You can view it in terms of different people having different estimates of pleasure and pain, or in other ways, but it would be ludicrous to suggest that all pleasures are the same and that it makes no difference to us which we choose to pursue in life.

In general, "we want to pursue choices that produce the life for us that is most completely full of pleasure," which means exactly the same thing as that "we want to pursue choices that produce that life for us that is most completely devoid of pain." Once you understand the equivalency then you are fine, but under conditions in which "absence of pain" first evokes in the person you are speaking to visions nihilistic nothingness, then you need to explain what you are saying in full.