

# What Did Epicurus Include in "Pleasure?"

Post by "Cassius" of March 31, 2019 at 10:32 PM

Poster 2 asked: "Can we conclude, then, that the pleasant life will look very similar for most people?"

Cassius:

Perhaps so if you limit the universe being considered drastically enough. The best life for all Eskimos in Alaska in the year 1930 would probably look roughly the same, perhaps, as an example. But the true ultimate point is that just as "justice" is not the same for all people at all places and all times (and that's explicit in [PD30-40](#)) so "virtue" is not going to be the same, and so the best application of "simplicity" or "sustainability" is not going to be the same. And the greater the differences in circumstances between the sets of people involved, the greater the difference in what is simple and sustainable and the best net result in terms of pleasure over pain is going to be.

And if you are diagnosed with cancer and have a year to live and have no wife and children to support, are you going to live the same way as if you are 25 and married with three kids and have no health problems?

I think the point of all this is that an Epicurean understanding of a universe which is not ordered by gods or fate or determinism demands a sliding scale. The ultimate unifying factor is the feeling of pain and pleasure which generally works the same for most humans, but beyond those facts of nature there are no hard and fast rules. Of course "the feeling of pain and pleasure which generally works the same for most humans" is itself a set of limits and boundaries, so it is also not true to think that "anything goes."

Poster 2 - And any order disappears into the chaotic entropy of relativism...

Cassius:

Order" is the trap the religionists expect you to fall into. The nature of things derives from the properties of the elements and the qualities of the bodies that come together from the elements. That gives us all the limits and bounds we need to have confidence in reality and to learn to live happily. There is no foundation for Randian "objectivism," and suggesting that just because there is no god everything is "subjective" is equally ridiculous. Go put your hand in a fire and tell yourself the resulting pain is all relative.

Also:

"But enough of criticism: let me turn to your puzzling letter of May 12. on matter, spirit, motion etc. It's crowd of scepticisms kept me from sleep. I read it, and laid it down: read it, and laid it down, again and again: and to give rest to my mind, I was obliged to recur ultimately to my habitual anodyne, 'I feel: therefore I exist.' I feel bodies which are not myself: there are other existencies then. I call them matter. I feel them changing place. This gives me motion. Where there is an absence of matter, I call it void, or nothing, or immaterial space. On the basis of sensation, of matter and motion, we may erect the fabric of all the certainties we can have or need. I can conceive thought to be an action of a particular organisation of matter, formed for that purpose by its creator, as well as that attraction in an action of matter, or magnetism of loadstone.

When he who denies to the Creator the power of endowing matter with the mode of action called thinking shall shew how he could endow the Sun with the mode of action called attraction, which reins the planets in the tract of their orbits, or how an absence of matter can have a will, and, by that will, put matter into motion, then the materialist may be lawfully required to explain the process by which matter exercises the faculty of thinking. When once we quit the basis of sensation, all is in the wind. To talk of immaterial existences is to talk of nothings. To say that the human soul, angels, god, are immaterial, is to say they are nothings, or that there is no god, no angels, no soul. I cannot reason otherwise."

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, August 15, 1820