

"Absence Of Pain Is Pleasure" - How Would You Articulate That To Someone?

Post by "Pacatus" of November 16, 2023 at 4:54 PM

This is how I currently sort it:

Pleasure and pain are like opposite ends of a rope on a pulley: as one goes up, the other goes down. There is no neutral state.

The opposite of physical pleasure is ponos (pain, however mild or strong); the opposite of mental pleasure is tarache (disturbance). Aponia is the absence of pain; ataraxia, the absence of mental disturbance/dis-ease (e.g., anxiety).

Pleasures can be kinetic (e.g., orgasm) or katastematic (e.g., the lingering, contented afterglow). In the mental realm, suppose I suddenly conclude that an important check bounced: anxiety (tarache); then I realize that was an error and my finances are all in order: I relax, the anxiety abates, I rest in the satisfied realization (ataraxia).

So, on the one hand, I think that ataraxia can be episodic with tarache; on the other hand, I think a more enduring ataraxia can be cultivated - perhaps as a stable equanimity, rather like the Zen calm of a warrior in the turmoil of battle.

But it is not the apatheia of the Stoics: ataraxia is felt -- at least as a background felt-sense.