

What If Anything Has Changed About Human Nature In the Last 2000 Years?

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2024 at 1:22 PM

[Quote from Martin](#)

Pleasure is not limited to immediate pleasure. More often than not, the Epicurean way means taking action which involves direct pain and results only much later in increased pleasure as compared to not have taken that action.

Not only is it not limited to "immediate," but time is only one of the factors involved. The much more profound aspect is that when Epicurus says that there are only two feelings, and that what is not pain is pleasure, then he is referring to experiences that most people do not think of as immediate sensory pleasure at all.

Sorry I have not been keeping up recently but this is what I would say in summary after reading the exchanges. Most everything that I see BraintoBeing describing as motivating him does not fit in either of the categories of physical pain or physical pleasure, although those sensations accompany certain aspects of all he is describing. If I read what BTB is saying correctly, he says that he finds "satisfying" and emotionally "the right thing to do" all sorts of things that are not immediate sensory pain or pleasure. Those aspects of awareness which are not perceived as painful Epicurus is considering to be pleasure.

So most of BraintoBeings' issues with "pleasure" as I read them continue to revolve around the limited definition he (and most people) give to the word "pleasure."

That is why it is important to study what the Epicureans actually said and wrote and not rely on the superficial definition of pleasure that the anti-Epicureans argued in the ancient world and that continues to prevail today. If someone is interested in digging into those details then they will find a lot to work with in what Epicurus wrote. If someone isn't interested in digging into that level of detail then they will find Epicurean formulations nothing but frustrating and they will go on hitting their heads against the wall until their heads give way and they go on to something more productive for them.

We see this over and over and over again. People see certain things that they like in Epicurus, but they don't get engaged in the details of what the ancient Epicureans really taught, and they spend their time churning their wheels over why they think Epicurus just really didn't go far enough in limiting his perspective to "pleasure." It's all very frustrating both for them and for those who actually ****do**** read into the details of Epicurus. And what I'm describing is probably 90% plus of the internet discussion of Epicurus.

This is much like the problem with humanism - they reject a theological basis for morality but then proceed to embrace exactly the same morality with only a few changes around the edges that the theologians embrace. Epicurus went much deeper to challenge the very definitions of good and evil in a very Nietzsche-like "beyond good and evil" way.

So I think this is a productive conversation so far, but to ever bring any kind of resolution to the issues the question of the definition of pleasure has to be addressed, and then after that it has to be made clear whether the "pleasure" being referred to is as Epicurus described it or as the rest of the world insists on describing it.

Not an easy thing to do but otherwise we just talk past each other forever.