

The pleasure ideal: Epicurean vs Cyrenaic

Post by "Peter Konstans" of March 31, 2024 at 11:13 AM

It's difficult to see Epicurean pleasure as something other than a static process when we see Epicurus writing things like that:

"We have need of pleasure when we are in pain from its absence : but when we are not feeling such pain, though we are in a condition of sensation, we have no need of pleasure. For the pleasure which arises from nature does not produce wickedness, but rather the longing connected with vain fancies."

" The stable condition of well-being in the body and the sure hope of its continuance holds the fullest and surest joy for those who can rightly calculate it."

Intense pleasures that cause movement are perfectly fine and there's absolutely no reason not to encourage them as long as one doesn't struggle with controlling them. But struggle with pleasures is usually the norm rather than the exception among humans.

Daniel describes how the Piraha quickly gain weight and become obese when they visit civilization for a while but lose all the excess fat gained in just a couple weeks upon their return to the tribe and then act as if nothing happened. They don't look forward to the next binge. That's a case of someone successfully enjoying himself to the fullest and then successfully avoiding dependence. When I lived in Germany I observed many young people - who were usually miserable - eagerly waiting for the weekend to arrive so they can get wasted drinking insane amounts of alcohol. That's the antithesis to the Piraha case. The Piraha live for today. Not for the weekend.