

The Axiology of Pain and Pleasure (are they intrinsic good/bad ?)

Post by "Cassius" of June 1, 2024 at 3:20 PM

Great post Onenski

[Quote from Onenski](#)

Now, for more clarification, the paragraph you quote from Wikipedia takes the metaethical sense of the naturalistic fallacy. The basic idea is that in a naturalistic ethical project (like the Epicurean one, for example), holding that pleasure (or any other natural entity) is good, implies that there's something in pleasure that makes it good. The question is, which property is that and why pleasure has it? For them, it implies that pleasure is a privileged entity, because it has the property of being ethically good. Here, people like Pigliucci may say that pleasure has an evolutionary and instrumental origin, so it can't have the privilege of being the entity with the property of THE Good.

As you may see, this approach looks suspicious, because is taking the naturalistic Epicurean theory in a kind of platonic terms. And then, for surprise of no one, falsify it.

For most of my life if I had read a paragraph like that - even your explanation of it, and not just someone like Pigliucci asserting it - I would have cursed under my breath and walked away convinced that such a person had nothing worthwhile to say whatsoever.

Nowadays my attitude is very different. I see that the word games involved are leaving probably 98% of the people of the world totally defenseless against the arguments of supernatural religion, nihilism, and all sorts of other depressing perspectives. And given that that is my firm conclusion that those arguments cause great practical harm, I don't think "cursing under my breach and walking away" is the appropriate response at all.

The proper response involves (1) recognizing that it doesn't matter whether the arguments are prompted maliciously by fraud or innocently in error, and (2) working appropriately to clearly state an articulate response.

That's where Epicurus comes in.