

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

Post by "Cassius" of June 4, 2024 at 10:31 AM

Don I wish you had been at our Zoom last night to discuss with Kalosyni her [Boeing astronaut / rocket ship question](#). Pursuing that at some point would advance this discussion too, because she has a position on what Epicurus would say to those astronauts that raises a lot of questions.

I think this current issue of how to look at virtue and psychological hedonism is in the same category.

It appears to me that we have to accept that Epicurus was using the terms "pleasure" and "gods" and even "virtue" in a totally nonstandard way, and that he was asserting that changing the paradigm on how those terms are used is essential for happy living.

That's why I see the "logical extreme" interpretation of [PD10](#) as so important -- I see Epicurus as saying that "IF we look at things his way," then a "pleasurable life" is a "pleasurable life" no matter what type of pleasure it contains, because we are using the term pleasure in a logically consistent way. From that perspective [PD10](#) is an in-your-face assertion that pleasure is pleasure.

I interpret your view of [PD10](#) as focusing on the "but it won't work because it is not possible part." Yes in practical terms that is true, but stopping there does not advance the philosophical argument.

Looking at things in a conceptually rigorous way, "IF a life of debauchery did in fact bring a pleasurable life" means that for purposes of discussion we are accepting that result -- and thus we would have no problem with such a person.

Staying with the "But it won't work" never gets you to the point - which is that pleasure must be seen as pleasure no matter what type of pleasure it is, if we are going to be able to discuss these things coherently.

Similarly, "gods" must be seen as non-supernatural and non-omniscient and non-omnipotent, no matter how many people disagree.

"Pleasure" must be seen as *every* experience of life that is not specifically painful, no matter how vigorously Cicero disagrees.

And "virtue" must be seen as totally contextual (that action which leads to pleasure) regardless of how strongly the religious and rationalist absolutists object.