

"Pleasure" vs "Pleasant Experiences"

Post by "Cassius" of February 5, 2025 at 5:26 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

PS. I'm thinking some of this is a matter of perspective and not just linguistic trickery.

I think this is what people are wrestling with mostly unsuccessfully. If you take the position that pleasure has to be stimulative (which means you accept Cicero's and Plato's and the other major philosophers' perspective) then you are going to think Epicurus is engaged in linguistic trickery.

If you take Epicurus' perspective that the purpose of life is not to fulfill some divine plan, but simply to live your life as happily as you can, then you can more easily see that being healthy and alive at all deserves to be considered pleasure, and you don't feel tricked by the fact that Epicurus doesn't promise you constant physical stimulation. A lot of people seem to think that Epicurus is saying that he's going to deliver them paradise through some kind of trick that the Stoics and Buddhists haven't thought of. (*Hmmmm yees - now I feel it - absence of pain really IS a great stimulant - feels kind of like marijuana - give me some more!!!*)

Epicurus' viewpoint is a lot closer to choosing to see the glass of life as half-full, rather than half-empty, than it is to any kind of Buddhist or Stoic mind games.

In fact, I am not sure I should say it's "close" to that. It's exactly what it is -- learning through philosophy to see that life is pleasurable in all its aspects unless you are specifically experiencing some specific pain in some part of your experience. If you are experiencing some specific pains, then to the extent you can, you should try to minimize that pain, but not at the expense of giving up the majority of pleasures that you've successfully won and which continue to be available to you at reasonable cost.

"The wise man always has more reason for joy than for vexation." --->

For this is the way in which Epicurus represents the wise man as continually happy; he keeps his passions within bounds; about death he is indifferent; he holds true views concerning the eternal gods apart from all dread; he has no hesitation in crossing the boundary of life, if that be the better course. Furnished with these advantages he is continually in a state of pleasure, and there is in truth no moment at which he does not experience more pleasures than pains. For he remembers the past with thankfulness, and the present is so much his own that he is aware of its importance and its agreeableness, nor is he in dependence on the future, but awaits it while enjoying the present; he is also very far removed from those defects of character which I quoted a little time ago, and when he compares the fool's life with his own, he feels

great pleasure. And pains, if any befall him, have never power enough to prevent the wise man from finding more reasons for joy than for vexation.

- *Torquatus - Cicero, On Ends 1:62*