

A Discussion On Pleasure and the Zero State

Post by "Cassius" of June 19, 2019 at 8:38 AM

GF: If we understand hunger as a form of pain, then there will necessarily be a state of hunger/pain between two meals. And the regular satisfaction of this need gives pleasure. We can never be constantly satisfied in all our physical needs. We are always oscillating between needs and their satisfaction. The smaller these oscillations are, the closer we are to eudaimonia.

Cassius Amicus: In Gosling & Taylor's "The Greeks on Pleasure" there is a discussion, if I recall, of the pleasures that arise from the fulfilment of bodily needs (such as hunger) with the experience of pleasures that do not arise from bodily needs (such as enjoying the fragrance of flowers, as a minor example). There are huge numbers of such pleasures which do not arise from need, and yet are perfectly acceptable to pursue in Epicurean terms so long as we evaluate them in accord with what the activity produces - net pleasure over pain.

To overemphasize satisfaction of basic needs as the goal of life would also tend toward asceticism and apathy, as I believe you commented earlier.

In fact I would go further and say that the word "tend" is a vast understatement. To focus on "needs" rather than "desires," and to fail to see that no pleasure is a bad thing in itself, will not only tend toward asceticism and apathy and stoicism, it would *demand* it.

That is why the entire framework of our understanding of pleasure needs to be re-examined according to Epicurean perspectives, because as it is now, our modern framework is totally corrupted.

If pleasure is the faculty given by Nature for us to know what to choose and to avoid, which I believe Epicurus teaches it is, then all who deprecate and attack pleasure as the goal are essentially "enemies of the human race."