

Discussion of Article: "On Pleasure, Pain and Happiness"

Post by "Cassius" of July 14, 2019 at 9:48 AM

(1) As to the spreadsheet graphic, I want to hear what Martin has to say and I will still want to get more feedback from others. I fully agree with the problem of reducing feelings to numbers, but I think that there is a subset of people who won't cringe but who will find the exercise useful. But I could be wrong 😊 I am not sure whether there is a better way to approach it than to test it more widely. As for Elayne's objection I know where she is coming from and I appreciate it. However with other people I suspect that the hot button I am going to hit is not "how dare you reduce feelings to numbers!" but rather "how dare you suggest that minimizing pain is not the goal!" That second group is my intended target.

(2) As to the alternate wording, I do think your suggestions are helpful. However I am also thinking that (maybe in the same way as with the spreadsheet?) we are bombing different targets. I think that "neutral state" is probably not what most people are wondering about. Definitely some do worry about that, and I think "neutral state" is important for discussing the logical problem of whether there is a third feeling besides pleasure and pain. But I think most people are not thinking "Pleasure, pain, and neutral" - they are thinking that Epicurus taught "pleasure, pain, and 'a higher pleasure he called ataraxia.'" They aren't fascinate by it because it is neutral, they are fascinated by it because they think that he was describing some kind of "higher" pain. On this point I don't generally like to discuss untranslated greek words because I think that obscures the issue, but in this context maybe we should talk about "ataraxia" because that is part of the Okeefe game. Not only imply that it something higher than pleasure, but always give it the fancy Greek name to imply that they have some kind of esoteric knowledge that no one else has.