

# Thoughts on continuous pleasure, hedonic regimen

Post by "Cassius" of August 29, 2019 at 10:15 PM

You're touching on many many things Godfrey. Some points / questions:

1. You mention Dewitt, Gosling and Taylor, and Wenham. Mentioning Wenham tells me specifically that you have read Wenham's point that pleasure is an "Experience" and that it makes no sense to discuss a pleasure that is somehow not experienced. So we are together there.
2. You mention G & T. I presume you are reading their chapter on K & K that is here in the forum, and not the whole book? If so, keep in mind that while it is good to read that chapter, it is a part of the much longer story of Greek views of pleasure to that point, so you're necessarily "starting in the middle."
3. As to DeWitt, i think I probably know the references you mean.
4. You do not mention [Nikolsky](#). If you will add that to the pot at some point, he does the best job of describing where the division came from (Carneades) so that adds perspective and takes away the otherwise perceived necessity of making Epicurus fit into that box.
5. Also, to add to the maze (I am afraid) I really think it's critical to become at least superficially familiar with the thrust of [Philebus](#). There you will see Plato/Socrates arguing against pleasure as the good in full force, and I think THAT is probably the essential background as much as anything else. Unless we start with the knowledge that the Greeks prior to Epicurus were arguing directly against pleasure being a candidate for "the good" we can make the major mistake of thinking that Epicurus thought that the issue was "a given." In fact it appears to me the opposite was true. Yes Epicurus was giving us who accept the legitimacy of pleasure tips on how to live more pleasurably, but he had a more basic and important goal first -- to establish that pleasure can even be considered as a legitimate goal.
6. So if 5 is true as I think it is, the continuous pleasure part (and this is something DeWitt points out) was intended as a logical argument against Plato more than it was something that was intended as a "practical tip"

(I better save this for a moment - I will add more)

So then YES - I completely agree with this! -->

## [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Sopleasure is pleasure. Some pleasures are the result of continuous effort, some are more immediate. Some are mental, some are physical. Some pleasures are attained by removing things (fear of the gods, fear of death, other mental disturbance, illness, etc.)

and some by obtaining and/or consuming or doing things (food, water, reading a good book, going skiing). Some are necessary for life, some make life more fun. Taking care of things that pain our bodies or disturb our minds brings us pleasure: health and serenity are our natural states and feel good. When our bodies and minds are free of pain and disturbance we can especially enjoy other pleasures, particularly if they outweigh any pain involved. As the sky has much variety but is all the sky, so goes pleasure.

And I think that is a large part of exactly the conclusion we are supposed to draw, in response to Plato saying that pleasure cannot be the goal because it cannot last (the continuity aspect) and also that some pleasures are of an entirely different type than others (and therefore we need "reason" in order to distinguish and rank them).

And so therefore I think that while the points made here are true ----

#### [Quote from Godfrey](#)

Using my examples above: 1) Having settled on a strategy for my finances, there are "chores" which I perform weekly, some which I perform quarterly, and some that I do every six months. Notably the chores aren't necessarily pleasurable in themselves, but they do lead to pleasure/peace of mind. 2) Having found a solution to a chronic health problem, one must continuously monitor one's diet, exercise, sleep, take one's meds if applicable, etc. 3) Similarly, philosophy requires continued reading, contemplation and ideally discussion to really take root and flourish.

..... I think it would be a mistake to think that these are the primary reasons that Epicurus made these points. The primary reason for the discussion is that in response to the attacks of other philosophers, "pleasure" must first be established as the legitimate goal in philosophical terms.

In other words we COULD just choose to observe that all young animals, before they are corrupted, pursue pleasure and avoid pain, and we could say "That is all the evidence I need" and the disengage from the philosophical argument as a waste of time.

But Epicurus lived in Athens where the schools were competing, and rightly so, for intellectual dominance, and he was not going to give up the field of intellectual warfare when he saw that he could defeat them on their own terms, and satisfy the intellectual needs of his students to understand why Plato and the others were wrong.

So in sum my point is that yes I think your conclusions as to practical application are correct, but do not forget the background of the argument and why the discussion is needed in the first

place. If not for the negative programming we have all received from religion and ascetic philosophies, much of this issue of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain would all be pretty much a matter of "common sense" that a child would be ashamed not to understand.

So it is important not to let the medicine intended to cure the philosophy students trip us up into thinking that there is some art here that is not pretty straightforward. I think it's easy to do that, and to think "Why is he saying all this?" "Surely this is obvious -- he must mean something mysterious. " And I think the answer is again as Torquatus said, that Epicurus was teaching something very simple, but which he expressed in egghead terms in order to help deprogram the eggheads -- which hopefully we can all see and not need after we understand the proofs:

*If then the doctrine I have set forth is clearer and more luminous than daylight itself; if it is derived entirely from Nature's source; if my whole discourse relies throughout for confirmation on the unbiased and unimpeachable evidence of the senses; if lisping infants, nay even dumb animals, prompted by Nature's teaching, almost find voice to proclaim that there is no welfare but pleasure, no hardship but pain—and their judgment in these matters is neither sophisticated nor biased—ought we not to feel the greatest gratitude to him who caught this utterance of Nature's voice, and grasped its import so firmly and so fully that he has guided all sane-minded men into the paths of peace and happiness, calmness and repose?*