

Exchange With A Stoic (Donald Robertson) on "Engagement" and Pleasure vs. Virtue

Post by "Godfrey" of October 31, 2019 at 3:56 PM

Quote

Donald Robertson:

That's normally a sticking point for many people, throughout history, who have found it counter-intuitive to say they would desire pleasure even at the expense of wisdom, self-awareness, or knowledge, etc. It leads to well-known dilemmas such as whether you would choose to be totally deceived/deluded about the most important things in life as long as that experience felt more pleasurable than knowing the truth.

The proper response to this comment imho is that pleasure is an inseparable part of the Canon and as such is **natural wisdom**. The "well known dilemmas" treat pleasure as separate from the Canon and therefore show a fundamental ignorance, willful or otherwise, of EP. An Epicurean does not "desire pleasure even at the expense of wisdom, self-awareness, or knowledge". An Epicurean employs pleasure (which is biological wisdom, self-awareness and knowledge), along with pain and a side order of reason, to determine the most important things in life.

There are stages in life, such as infancy and senility, when the important things in life are reduced to the pleasures of a full belly and a dry diaper. But that's a different discussion.

I think that, stated in this way, this is actually a useful starting point for discussion with Stoics and their ilk.