

Discussion of the Society of Epicurus' 20 Tenets of 12/21/19

Post by "Elayne" of December 22, 2019 at 8:08 PM

For 1 and 2, the footnotes are to articles by Hiram and not to primary source material. The second article, by Hiram, says at the end,

"Our hedonism is not about us being subjective, or whimsical, it's what we mean what we say that nature is our guide: if we ignore our faculties, it's only to our detriment and to our harm. If we heed them, it's to our advantage.

Our natural goods are all pleasant, and pleasure is always good." But no quotes are given from Epicurean sources.

The statement that hedonism is not about us being subjective is in contradiction to Tenet #2, which says pleasure and aversion are about subjective nature. There seems to be, as I suspected from the inaccurate division of our perceptions into subjective and objective, a disdain for subjective experience creeping in, perhaps unconsciously. Why would it be a problem if pleasure seeking was subjective? It IS subjective. It can't be experienced other than subjectively.

I also thought I read in Tenet 2 a hint of a standard other than pleasure-- a suggestion that pleasure and pain are useful for a more important purpose, survival or health perhaps. This initial impression is strengthened by the quote above.

While this is of course the way evolution works-- faculties that lead to survival and reproduction persist-- that is not the same thing as making survival and reproduction our primary goal. Any time you start bringing up evolutionary causes as conscious goals, then you ought to include reproduction, not just survival, to be internally consistent. This leads to saying pleasure is good because it leads to survival and offspring, and if there is a circumstance where pain leads to survival and more offspring, we ought to choose that instead.

Pain and pleasure are not just value-setting faculties, which sounds abstract-- they are primarily _feelings_-- sensations. Pleasure is always good simply because pleasure is the only good-- it is the definition of good. Good is a meaningless word unless you are talking about the feeling of pleasure. And I don't think your article makes that clear-- it makes pleasure and pain sound primarily instrumental. This is an entirely different slant on things than what you get from reading Epicurus.