

Glossary - What is the Epicurean Definition of "Pleasure?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 18, 2020 at 9:17 AM

OK here Gosling and Taylor begin to discuss how Platon and other Greeks recognized the deficiency of the replenishment model (and with this I think Epicurus would have agreed). I may paste some more clips if I find some particularly good ones, but I'll probably have to drop and come back to this later. The point for now is the there are inherent problems with the

6.7.3. This state of confusion would make it hard for him to be sure just what it was about mixed pleasures that made them especially hard to replenish. In the *Gorgias* the analysis was fairly close to its physiological origins. A depletion, which is an imbalance in the organism, is at once a form of distress and desire. The desire is the urge of the organism to right the imbalance which is/causes the distress. Pleasure is the righting of the imbalance or fulfilment of the desire. It is assumed that every imbalance is distressing and every such distress a desire. Clearly, the example of pleasures that are not escapes from distress, such as smells, will show (i) that a quite new analysis is needed, or (ii) that we must reject the view that all imbalances are distressing, or (iii) that we must reject the view that pleasure is the righting of an imbalance, or **replenishment** of a natural lack. Since the latter underlies Book IX of the *Republic* as an attempted single analysis, Plato should not want to accept (i) or (iii). Instead he should take the second line. There is, however, no resultant examination of the relation of desires to lacks. It is enough that we can have desires/lacks which are not distressing, and these the philosopher has.

rd as we discuss it. (Gosling is all the page cite we really

6.8.1. The original account of pleasure associates pleasure with the process of replenishing. The obvious way to extend the picture is to find non-bodily lacks which can be replenished. We can now see people who are pursuing different styles of life as trying to meet different lacks. As the *Symposium* has it (204a) no one desires what he does not think he lacks. Pleasure is the **replenishment** of desire and only that which truly replenishes a desire is truly pleasant. Now everything is set up for showing the philosopher's superiority, since the objects of his pursuit are the only ones to give genuine replenishment. Unfortunately, there is a fatal ambiguity in this notion of replenishment. Suppose we take it, as the original account requires, that the pleasure consists in the replenishing. Then it ceases when the replenishment is complete. In that case, if the philosopher's desires can be genuinely satisfied, that means that the so-called process of replenishing genuinely and once for all replenishes. But then as life goes on and a philosopher acquires full understanding he will be wise, and, as *Symp.* 204a declares, in that case he will no longer desire wisdom. Since these desires/lacks are now satisfied there is no further replenishing of them to occur. So the more successful a philosopher is, the sooner his

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A fatal ambiguity

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life will cease to be pleasant. This considerably weakens the argument that his life will be pleasanter. Alternatively, one

Chapter 7

Philebus

1. The period after the *Republic*

7.1.1. After the *Republic*, the three main discussions of pleasure occur in the *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*. In *Tim.* 64–6 there is a treatment of bodily pleasure where the simple equation of pleasure with **replenishment** is abandoned, and to which we shall have to return in discussing the nature of Plato's theories. There are also at 69 some rude remarks about pleasure, where the word is obviously used in its restricted sense. If we want to know how Plato stood on the problems left by the *Republic* we have to turn to the *Philebus* and *Laws*. It will be assumed that that is the order of composition of the *Philebus* and the relevant parts of the *Laws* and they will be discussed in that order.

is pleasure of the organism in proper condition. We also know (cf. 8.2, 15.1, Appendix B) that during the fourth century, and in many cases associated with the Academy, there had been various analyses of pleasure which had portrayed it as a *genesis*, a **replenishment**, a movement, or a *katastasis eis phusin* (restoration to the natural state). The purpose of many of these views had been to show that pleasure could not be the good since it was a movement aimed at an end term, and it is the end term that must be the good. Clearly

how pleasure cannot be the

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Katastematic and Kinetic Pleasures

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anyone wishing, like Epicurus, to hold that pleasure is the good, might feel the need, against such views, still in evidence when the *Magna Moralia* was written, to assert that in addition to such kinetic pleasures (pleasures of movement) there are pleasures of the *katastēma*. Indeed, if our view is correct, Epicurus, perhaps taking a hint from Aristotle, seems to have held that when the organism is operating properly it will be in a state of pleasure, and pain is a matter of unnatural operation. This, note, is a view about the organism not