

Consequentialism & Moral Relativism within the context of Pleasure-filled Philosophy

Post by "Don" of March 10, 2020 at 10:18 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

Whether or not we choose to label Epicurean Philosophy as hedonistic is another debate, but what is shared between Epicureans and Hedonists/Libertines/Utilitarian Ethics is both; our recognition of pleasure as *good* and choosing actions that result in pleasure for ourselves and sometimes our close ones if it benefits us. This is ultimately where the title of the thread becomes relevant as no matter what those who critique us & pleasure will group us in with other pleasure seekers or isolate us and then choose to attack, with issues of morality being a formidable argument according to the attacker's perception. But what does everyone here think? How exactly do we hold each other accountable, including pleasure seekers who wouldn't label themselves Epicurean and aren't familiar with our concepts of frankness and justice, but otherwise share many of our values?

I will admit that my first reaction was "It's not my responsibility to answer for all those who call themselves 'Hedonists/Libertines/Utilitarians' If people lump us all in together!"

But, upon further reflection, it doesn't do us any good to get painted with the broad brush of prejudice and not defend ourselves. We need to have a proper reaction at the ready. I don't know what that is, but let's ponder it together.

I do think it's very important the way you phrased it: "according to the attacker's perception." They're the ones who need correcting. They're the ones with whom we have to engage. What do we need to get through to them and how?

Additionally, I don't think we can hold Hedonists/Libertines/Utilitarians accountable. We are not all part of a big tent. They don't need to listen to us and vice versa.

BUT we do need to distinguish ourselves from other "pleasure seekers" because that's just not what we are. We believe (*I think*) that pleasure is the *summum bonum* since pleasure is what stands alone. Pleasure is not a means to an end. Pleasure is! Virtue is only a means to pleasure. Why do we try to practice wisdom, to be moral, and to be just? Because we believe KD 5: "It is not possible to live a joyous life without the traits of wisdom, morality, and justice; and it is impossible to live with wisdom, morality, and justice without living joyously. When one of these is lacking, it is impossible to live a joyous life." Virtue is a means to an end: living pleurably. Morality is a means to an end: living pleurably. Pleasure is the end to which we're heading!

The reason that we're not libertines and decadents is that that lifestyle is not sustainable. It does not lead to living pleurably. Sure, I can enjoy a few beers. Sure, I can enjoy a fine meal. But I don't want to stay drunk continuously and gorge myself on fine food every day. That's a recipe for pain.

The argument against Epicureans that murderers find murder pleasurable isn't necessarily easy to overcome. Murderers may truly believe that they find sadistic pleasure in their crime, and I'm not entirely convinced by that specious Epicurean argument that they will be troubled by knowledge that they cannot be sure they will go undetected. It sounds good but some people are sociopaths. BUT does it REALLY lead to a murderer *living pleurably*. We REALLY have to define what we mean by "living pleurably" I think. Almost by definition, someone who derives "pleasure" - and I deliberately put that in quotes - from their heinous crimes isn't living pleurably by almost any rational societal understanding - prolepsis, if you will - of what "living pleurably" means. That's another thing I believe that sets us Epicureans apart, knowing that "living pleurably" has to be sustainable. We work towards maximizing sustained pleasure, not having momentary jolts of kinetic pleasures. That's what we work towards not just aponia but also ataraxia.

This is a fascinating and important thread to discuss. I hope I've added some food for thought and look forward to reading more from everyone.