

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

Post by "Elayne" of March 14, 2020 at 1:14 PM

I agree with everything Cassius has said, Eugenios, and I think this is an extremely important issue to understand, in order to thoroughly grasp this philosophy. Once you have fully gotten it, you won't have trouble recognizing when people aren't understanding it.

One way people can accidentally slip into idealism on this subject is through using personifying language about nature. Epicurus did do that, but I am sure he made certain his students knew what he was doing. If that is tripping you up, you might want to avoid using metaphorical language and see if it is easier to avoid this trouble.

The actual way we got to develop both the capacity for pleasure and specific preferences is through evolution. Humans who followed their desires to pursue pleasure and avoid pain survived and reproduced-- but it is not that the sweet fruit which was life-supporting was designed for us and the poisonous fruit not. We evolved together. The sweet fruit propagated by having us eat it and evacuate its seeds, so those fruits which matched our tastes most closely were propagated more, and we learned to continue to eat them-- humans who had a taste for them and could get those calories survived. The poisonous fruit which does not spread that way survived humans eating it by mutations which killed or repelled through taste --- the fruit without that taste and/or poison mutation didn't survive, if our eating it killed it off. The humans who ate food tasting that way didn't make it. None of this was according to any kind of design.

The typically shared pleasures of our species were evolved, such as a tendency to empathy and cooperativeness... but the "cheater" niche, which includes sociopaths, is a consistently filled niche in most if not all species. It isn't unnatural. It has advantages and disadvantages, and a member of the cheater niche is going to feel pleasure and pain from different stimuli than the rest of us. Their subjective pleasure can only be sensed by them. Species with cheaters also evolve ways among the typical members to detect and contain cheater activity within a certain range-- or else that population tends to die off. Unchecked cheating is not a successful evolutionary event.

In the last two paragraphs, I have gone beyond what Epicurus said, because he did not have all the evolutionary science available to him which we have now. But I think what I have said is coherent with the philosophy. I have not yet found any observable material phenomena to conflict with his philosophy, because it is based in reality.