

Pleasure: ruminations from sequestration

Post by “Godfrey” of May 6, 2020 at 3:21 PM

Speaking from experience and not from the sources, I'm finding "intensity" to be an unsatisfying description from a practical perspective, although probably a good description from a theoretical perspective.

Theoretically, pleasure as a faculty is unified. Organisms are biologically guided by attraction to pleasure and avoidance of pain; intensity of total pleasure is what is important for this faculty.

But we are thinking organisms whose thinking often interferes with the pursuit of pleasure. So on a practical level, for guidance in choices and avoidances to live a good and pleasurable life, I think more nuance is needed. We do have natural and necessary v vain pleasures for a starting point for choice and avoidance but, at least to my thinking now, that doesn't go far enough.

That's why I brought up "meaning" for discussion, but that seems problematic particularly because it can so easily be associated with universal principals.

In thinking about my past pleasures, the ones that are the most gratifying often have more than one "layer" to them. For instance studying Epicurus: there's the "layer" of enjoying reading, one of pondering, one of connection to Western history and culture, one of discussing in this forum 😊, one of putting the ideas into practice, one of perceiving the alignment of theory and practice, etc. Also there are physical and mental pleasures. So in terms of planning and choosing pleasures, one pleasure might be very intense on just one level whereas another might be more satisfying because it stimulates several levels but perhaps with less intensity on each level. Think of scanning old family photographs and the various "levels" of pleasure involved: organizing a mess, looking at pictures, observing history, connection to family, sharing the results....

Also regarding practical "choice and avoidance" decisions, duration is a factor.

Isn't this type of practical discussion something that would have gone on in the garden?

If we're to be connoisseurs of pleasure we really need to examine the nuances of the pursuit of pleasure in addition to the theory. Maybe we could learn from each other by examining various pleasures from experience. This could give us information to examine our own pleasures as well as the theory.