

Managing Expectations In The Study of Epicurus

Post by “Don” of May 9, 2020 at 9:18 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

If Bailey's "internal sensations" is referring to the same subject, then maybe what we're missing is a word or terminology that ties pleasure and pain more tightly to some kind of "internal natural guidance system" that does in fact stand shoulder to shoulder as an equivalent with "divine inspiration" or "logic" as a concept in the fight to determine what is the proper goal of life. As it is, when we talk of "pleasure" the connotation is so tightly tied to "chocolate cake" and the like that it is hard to see the forest for the trees. When we explain to people that "pleasure and pain" are the guides to life, it would be nice to have an articulate way to explain to them that Epicurus was not meaning to list PARTICULAR pleasures or pains, but was referring to the overall mechanism given to us by nature to fulfill that guidance role.

It seems hugely important to me to be able to start with the observation that Diogenes Laertius made that "the feelings are two - pleasure and pain" in order to explain the whole issue of absence of neutral states, limits of pleasure, and especially how the presence of one equals in quantity the absence of the other.

I bet that the ambiguity that we experience in the term "feeling" would almost without a doubt have been addressed and explained by Epicurus if we had more of the texts. On that same point, my bet is also that certain aspects of this, like with the issue of "preconceptions" are buried unrecognized in plain view in front of us in Lucretius - we just fail to recognize it.

If you're referring to your first clip as Bailey and "internal sensations", yes, that's the same pathē.

I think you're onto something. Maximizing Pleasure is the goal, but we use both pathē to make our choices and rejections (okay, avoidances, but I dislike that translation). One feeling without the other as part of the Canon is like trying to ride a bicycle with one wheel.

[This abstract I found online I found interesting:](#)

Quote

In the first chapter, which is new to this edition, Konstan calls on psychology to flesh out the Epicurean understanding of empty fears and irrational desires—ancient psychology, that is: a science of the soul. Konstan's reading of the relation between

sensation (aisthēseis), the passions (pathē) of pleasure and pain, and belief (doxa) in Epicurean doctrine is unorthodox but thorough. Rather than mapping pathē onto either the soul as a whole or the body, Konstan assigns pathē to the non-rational part of the soul, the seat of sensation. He locates the emotions, which “do not seem to have a special name in Epicurean theory,” in the rational part (11). Crucial to this schema is Konstan’s claim, based on Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura* and Diogenes Laertius’s doxography of Epicurus, that Epicureans did not consider emotions such as fear and joy to be pathē at all, since emotions depend on memory and reasoning, whereas pathē do not. The upshot is that fear, as a rational emotion, involves belief and evaluation, and is therefore susceptible to error; whence the psychological roots of pernicious “empty beliefs.”

This is possible direction to talk of unifying the pathē into one description.