

Dialogue on Katastematic Pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of February 17, 2018 at 6:15 AM

Thank you both so far for posting. I will reply further to both but here is what I posted as preliminary thoughts:

Thanks for all the work you put into this Hiram. I have been busy and even now have not been able to read closely through this or the associated article on the standard interpretation of static pleasure. I have skimmed but will do go over this in much more detail as soon as possible and comment further. However based on what I have read this is the expected framework of my reaction:

Pleasure is an experience of life, and experiences of life occur only through mental and bodily feeling. Total absence of feeling is death. Because pleasures are feelings, and not reasonings or concepts, pleasures have no existence apart from our experience of them. It is not even possible to convey more than the sketchiest experience of feelings in words, much less it is possible through reasoning to fully describe pleasures. Pleasures therefore cannot be reduced to concepts, and even the most intelligent computer can never experience feelings through logical circuitry.

Cicero's argument against Epicurus is effective because most people understand that pleasures are feelings, just as Epicurus said. Most people also know the reverse - that there is no pleasure (or anything else) in non-feeling. Standing alone, a statement that says or implies that "absence of pain" equals "the highest pleasure" is nonsensical and absurd. That is because absent the Epicurean premises about nature of all feelings being either pleasure or pain, such a statement says nothing about what IS being felt. To most people, the statement "absence of pain" conveys nothing about what is being felt, and by implication implies that NOTHING is being felt. This is again an absurdity since total absence of feeling is death, not the highest pleasure. If all pleasure is feeling, the greatest pleasure cannot come through non-feeling.

Cicero would never have had an argument, and we would not be discussing this, but for the widespread implication that "katastematic pleasure" or "absence of pain" is not only non-feeling, but it is also different in kind and superior to other forms of pleasure. That was the general implication of the words then, and it is the general implication of them today. But since all pleasures of any kind come only through the experience of feeling, terms like "absence of pain" and "katastematic" create cognitive dissonance - obvious contradictions which cannot be reconciled.

I'll defer this to another discussion, but I also think discussing "the highest pleasure" is on its

face a nonsensical position in Epicurean terms. There is no single category or description of pleasure that is higher than all others ****other than**** as a measure of "quantity" or "purity," which is the way I believe this discussion was intended, as a technical response to Platonic arguments about quantity and purity. The pleasure that comes when we escape near death, which is the best description we have from Epicurus as to "the good," seems to me to be a statement of tremendous intensity of feeling, the furthest thing possible from what is conveyed by "absence of pain" or "katastematic pleasure."