

Gosling & Taylor, The Greeks on Pleasure.

Post by "Cassius" of June 28, 2020 at 7:32 AM

in reading the above, I kept looking for a plain and simple statement of what appears to be the fundamental premise about all this in Epicurean theory. Would this be correct?

"Perceptions" and "sensations" are closely related terms describing different aspects of the mechanisms of experience that generate what we call "feeling." There are only two feelings, pleasure and pain, which means that everything we experience is either pleasurable or painful. All of the discussion about highest and best pleasures and their duration and evaluation revolve around the basic observation that all experience is either one or the other, which means that the presence of one means the absence of the other, and thus that the purest/most intense form of experiencing either one is when the other is totally absent. Life is all about feeling, and the state of being without feeling is nothing to us (death).

The reason this sounds sterile is that it is a high level abstract analysis useful for framing the debate with Plato and dialecticians and defeating their arguments. The advice of Epicurus is not to live in this world of words, however, but of feeling, and if we stay in this mode for too long, longer than is necessary to see the perversity of the dialecticians, then we become trapped like flies on flypaper. The point of Epicurean philosophy is to see this dialectical trap and escape from it to the real world of feeling, not linger in the world of dialectics thinking that we've reached some height of "ataraxia" simply because we have succeeded in pointing out that the Emperor Plato and his minions have no clothes.