

Is [X] a waste of time?

Post by "Cassius" of October 1, 2020 at 7:06 AM

OK I apologize for being slow, because I think we need to discuss THIS aspect, as possibly the most important aspect of all -- or at least the most urgent for us to consider:

Is it possible to "waste time" pursuing something that is a pleasure, or is fun?

My answer would be OF COURSE YES ---- IF by engaging in that pleasure you deprive yourself of something that is a GREATER PLEASURE TO YOU.

This is probably near the root of the entire travesty of modern commentators saying that "painlessness" was Epicurus' true goal. Why would anyone accept "painlessness" as their identification of the good, when they have the opportunity to experience "the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain?" That's the reason the texts have this statement: "We are inquiring, then, what is the final and ultimate Good, which as all philosophers are agreed must be of such a nature as to be the End to which all other things are means, while it is not itself a means to anything else. **This Epicurus finds in pleasure; pleasure he holds to be the Chief Good**, pain the Chief Evil." As well as: "And for this cause we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good. And since pleasure is the first good and natural to us, for this very reason we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them: and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time. Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided."

Why would you accept spending a lifetime eating bread and water when you have the opportunity to eat and drink things that you find much more pleasurable, and you can do that without incurring pain that you find to be too high a price to pay? "And again independence of desire we think a great good — not that we may at all times enjoy but a few things, but that, if we do not possess many, we may enjoy the few **in the genuine persuasion that those have the sweetest pleasure in luxury who least need it**, and that all that is natural is easy to be obtained, but that which is superfluous is hard."

That's the issue we have to confront -- accepting less pleasure than is possible, when that pleasure does not cost in pain more than we are willing to pay - I submit we should consider to be a huge mistake -- and indeed a "waste of time."

More Torquatus, stating this explicitly:

In a free hour, when our power of choice is untrammelled and when nothing prevents our being able to do what we like best, every pleasure is to be welcomed and every pain avoided. But in certain emergencies and owing to the claims of duty or the obligations of business it will frequently occur that pleasures have to be repudiated and annoyances accepted. The wise man therefore always holds in these matters to this principle of selection: **he rejects pleasures to secure other greater pleasures**, or else he endures pains to avoid worse pains.