

A shower thought on pleasure and meals.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of February 15, 2022 at 2:37 PM

After returning from a walk with my dog, I decided that the best possible thing to do would be to get under a nice, warm shower. And while I was there, I thought of a hypothetical discussion Epicurus and his students might have had.

The following lines are all from Epicurus's (or one of his colleagues) point of view.

Silence, please!

Today, let us discuss the concept of pleasure. As many of you know, the enemies of our school accuse us of orgies and reckless hedonism- but truly, our goal is the greatest pleasure. And, you may ask, how do we obtain this pleasure?

(nodding students)

Well, let me demonstrate it at the example of food. We need it every day, but how much?

If I eat every single hour, the food will be unpleasurable. I'll have lots of it, and I'll become fat. Let us transfer this practice to the Cyrenaics, they'll have fun with that.

(laughter, "haha, Cyrenaics!")

If I eat every five hours, the food will taste good, and you won't be hungry. You'll get pleasure from food, every single time you eat it.

But then you may ask: the rarer I eat, the more pleasure I get from the food, right? So lets simply eat rarer and rarer, and the pleasure will become bigger and bigger. Simple, isn't it?

To that I may answer: let's try it out! Imagine that we eat only once a day. The food will taste delicious- but in the meantime, you'll be hungry and crave it. I'll go even further: all your thought will be evolving around food. You'll look at the sun, in order to determine how long until you're allowed to eat. You'll avoid parties, because there's food- and a big temptation to eat it. To sum it up, you'll be unhappy.

You may then decide to abstain from food for a long time. Let's say, you fast for a month. After a short while, you won't feel hunger anymore. The meal you'll have at the end of the month will taste like the food of the Gods. But is this pleasure worth more than the pleasure you could've derived if you ate a bit every single day? Probably not. Also, if this concept seems appealing to you, then I highly recommend becoming a monk- they need such people.

(a few laughs, but most of the audience is focused on the teacher)

So you might decide to fast even longer, in order to increase your pleasure- maybe for a year. But then I won't believe you, as you're evidently a liar!

(laughter, the atmosphere is good)

So, in order to extract the most pleasure out of food, we have to keep a balance between overeating and starving ourselves. Right? The balance can only be determined by YOU. Every single human being is a little bit different- some need more food, some less. I, for example, eat only twice a day, in the companion of friends and great minds. But you may prefer to eat three or four times a day. Even so, it's of utmost necessity to feel food, to taste it. By doing so, you'll avoid bad food, food of low quality, and prefer good meals. You'll eat healthy stuff, avoid drinking too much wine and beer, because you'll actually feel what you eat. But you also won't come into temptation to starve yourself in order to feel even the last bit of taste from the meal, as some monks might suggest you. Keep a balance, and enjoy life!

Class dismissed!

(applause, "Hail Epicurus!", students are crying of luck, a few angry Sceptics storm out)

Basically, that's a lot of nonsense, I know. But nevertheless, the idea behind it was very important to me- that in order to get most of the pleasure, you need to keep a balance. In some sense, that's a bit of a connection towards the start of [this post](#), in which I asked what to think about Aristotle's Golden Mean. And, although [Nate already wrote what I'm thinking of right now](#), I just now begin to realize the importance behind it all. In order to gain the maximum pleasure, we have to keep a balance, but the goal **doesn't become** the balance itself- it's only an instrument...

To be honest, I'm a bit sorry that you had to read through this, as this point has been emphasized here at the forum over and over and over again. but maybe some Internet stranger from the future will find this post and think "maybe Epicureanism has a bit of truth in it!"

(and, to be honest, this post serves as a reminder for me to not give into false pretenses and wrong worldviews, but that's a topic for another day 😊)

Anyway, when I stepped out of the shower, I felt refreshed, warmed up, and filled with new ideas. Here they are. Hope you enjoyed it!

Post by “Cassius” of February 15, 2022 at 4:06 PM

Excellent post and no need to worry about repetition. We'll be repeating this as long as we live.

[Quote from smoothiekiwi](#)

. In order to gain the maximum pleasure, we have to keep a balance, but the goal doesn't become the balance itself- it's only an instrument...

I do think that you're using the word colloquially, so that "balance" is find as an approximation of the issue, but in the end it is probably an important point that "balance" is not in itself a goal. We don't want a "Balance" of pleasure and pain, for example, or a balance between nutritious food and poison.

There are lots of ways to talk about this and I can't even begin to list them. I really don't care for the word "prudent" because of its modern connotations, but I guess that really is more in the direction we're looking for. We aren't looking in most cases for "balance" - we're looking for the "right amount" that maximizes pleasure and minimizes pain.

Post by “smoothiekiwi” of February 16, 2022 at 2:56 AM

Yes, you're right! The more I study this philosophy, the more it seems that everything falls into place, and especially- that Epicurus was a very wise man 😄

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I really don't care for the word "prudent" because of its modern connotations, but I guess that really is more in the direction we're looking for.

You've expressed it better than I did. You're right, there's no balance in eating poisonous and healthy food, or in drinking dirty and clean water. Thanks for clarifying! Although I'll probably need a bit of time to „consolidate“ this thought, it rationally makes sense.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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Glad to hear it, thanks ☐