

Psychopaths and Pleasure

Post by “Hiram” of May 18, 2015 at 10:56 AM

It's been said that Epicurean philosophy treats the mind in its healthy, natural state, like positive psychology does, but what happens when people are so sick and broken, psychologically, that they take pleasure in masochism, sadism, and cruelty? What happens when people take pleasure in horrible things.

One reply I can come up with is in PD 39, where we are invited to remove ourselves from the presence of this person, to ostracize a sociopath or psychopath, which our legal and prison system already does. The words used as "so far as it is advantageous, exclude them from your life" - because friendship should be, and is by nature, mutually advantageous. A psychopath provides no advantage by his friendship.

Quote

The man who best knows how to meet external threats makes into one family all the creatures he can; and those he can not, he at any rate does not treat as aliens; and where he finds even this impossible, he avoids all dealings, and, so far as is advantageous, excludes them from his life.

If others would like to brainstorm arguments re: psychopaths and pleasure so that we can more accurately debate this issue, please share those here.

Post by “Hiram” of May 18, 2015 at 3:58 PM

The following piece deals with how our contractarian theories answer the accusation by the philosophers of the polis / of the state that a hedonist can not be a good citizen.

[Reconciling Justice With Pleasure in Epicurean Contractarianism](#), John Thrasher

Post by “Cassius” of May 27, 2015 at 9:06 AM

This is a very important topic.

Quote from Hiram

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One answer to "What happens when people take pleasure in horrible things?" is to observe that in regard to gods, virtue, platonic forms, essences, etc -- the same thing happens - **NOTHING**. Gods, virtue, platonic forms, essences, etc., do not exist in themselves to provide any remedy for people who suffer from the acts of psychopaths. The potential victims of the psychopaths must act to protect themselves from that conduct, or they will **not** be protected from that conduct. Our thinking that the situation is bad will not change the facts that there is no outside force to protect us from psychopaths, any more than there are outside forces to protect us from tornadoes or meteors.

Post by "Cassius" of May 27, 2015 at 9:09 AM

[Quote from Hiram](#)

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Hiram I think that is exactly on point and is the key to the answer. We can also cite PD6. "In order to obtain protection from other men, any means for attaining this end is a natural good."

Also, this from the Torquatus section of Cicero's "On Ends": "Yet nevertheless some men indulge without limit their avarice, ambition and love of power, lust, gluttony and those other desires, which ill-gotten gains can never diminish but rather must inflame the more; inasmuch that they appear proper subjects for restraint rather than for reformation."