

Implications of the Role of Pleasure/Pain in the "Canon of Truth"

Post by "Cassius" of February 2, 2016 at 4:11 PM

[Distilled from [a Facebook discussion](#) for future reference]:

When we refer to the CANON as so important, I think there is something else going on which is not obvious. It is also important to think about the elements of the canon. The translations I read of the word "canon" indicate that it meant "test of truth" or "measure of truth." As I read it, Epicurus was saying that the senses, anticipations, and pain/pleasure were the three legs of that canon. That means that these three legs are the means given by nature for observing and testing everything we come into contact with around us. And of these three legs, there is only *one* leg, the pleasure-pain leg, which gives us any information as to a contact's desirability or undesirability.

So I think we need to make very clear why we are referring to the canon. It does the canon no harm to say that we can and must go outside the canon in order to think about what the canon is telling us as it applies to our future actions. That's the only way we can make decisions about the longer-term results of our actions, and that's why Epicurus was not a range-of-the-moment hedonist. But Epicurus also saw that in the end, if we want to live according to Nature, all evaluation of the results of our actions can be judged by no other standard than the legs of the canon. So all decisions are ultimately tested by and must be brought back to the canon itself, and in the canon, the only test of desirability is pleasure and the only test of undesirability is pain. That's why the discussion of the Canon is so critical and separates Epicurus from those who held "reason" or "logic" to be the keys to proper living.

Diogenes Laertius: "Now in The Canon Epicurus affirms that our sensations and preconceptions and our feelings are the standards of truth..... Every sensation, he says, is devoid of reason and incapable of memory; for neither is it self-caused nor, regarded as having an external cause, can it add anything thereto or take anything therefrom. Hence it is from plain facts that we must start when we draw inferences about the unknown. For all our notions are derived from perceptions, either by actual contact or by analogy, or resemblance, or composition, with ***some slight aid from reasoning.***"

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In the photo : "The more the person is concerned with the study of nature, the more he succeeds fearlessness, the more he uses the measurement of pain and pleasure. These two produce pleasure that belongs to the individual, (because pleasure belongs to the one who feels it, of course). At the same time, however, the person practices the art of sufficiency which is improved with the study of nature and the more one achieves self-sufficiency, the more

freedom he acquires and thus greater the pleasure it provides to the individual.

Let's not insist on completeness of the analysis (which anyway does not exist), but in the method. It includes the general picture. We can later move to the rest which are the multiple causes of human happiness. We can combine the rest. Then, we are going to see what emerges from the composition of the rest. In a more compound form we will observe the rebound and feedback. The more this process provides pleasure to a person, the greater the desire to study the nature. The system does not use the law of excluded middle, i.e. pleasure or no pleasure, fearlessness or not fearlessness etc, but uses the Epicurean Multi-valued way of the Canon where the above causes constantly get different values depending on the decisions and our actions. Imagine, for example, that I give great importance to the fearlessness and succeed pleasure from there, but I give little importance to self-sufficiency. So, depending on the general activity at a certain time, one cause will affect the other continuously taking different values and all the separate data will pulsate and will affect one another until the system settles and perhaps I wish that calmness means Katastematic pleasure of the individual. The system is dynamic, it is evolving like the Nature and covers the needs of the Epicurean philosophy, which observes things as they proceed and as Diogenes of Oenoanda writes (in response to Peripatetics) this flow, flowing as he says, can be scrolled quickly but not so fast as not to conceive a situation of it". By George Kaplanis