

Peter Abelard and Reconciling Epicurean Philosophy with Christianity through Dialogue

Post by "Cassius" of March 12, 2021 at 2:06 PM

Thank you for posting that, Charles.

One of many aspects I find interesting is the part you included:

Quote

(217) THE CHRISTIAN: "No one correctly calls that than which something greater is found the 'ultimate good.' For what is below or less than something cannot by any means be called 'supreme' or 'ultimate.'

This calls to my mind how important it is to some people to have a convincing argument on this question -- as to whether a thing can qualify as the "ultimate good" if something can be added to it to make it better (or supreme / ultimate).

This is why I think it's critical to see PD3 as a response to this argument rather than an endorsement of "absence of pain" as a code-word for something other than pleasure.

Lots of these people were focused on the argument of what is BEST, and if they can't conclude that their goal is BEST, and that nothing is higher, then they dismiss it as their goal. From an abstract logical point of view I can see their point, and I firmly believe that that's what Epicurus decided to address with his absence of pain argument. From a logical point of view, pure pleasure with no mixture of pain cannot be made better, and that's the "limit of the quantity of pleasure" that defines the Epicurean goal of life.

It is so perverse to mutate "pure pleasure" with no mixture of pain into something that is not pleasure at all!

But that's what these "reconcilers" apparently including Abelarde were trying to do, and continue to try to do today. They are trying to reconcile death with life, food with poison, and no one should be surprised that the melding of the two does not make any sense.

I have no doubt that Epicurus was very clear to keep these perspectives separate and we would see this stated explicitly if we had more texts. It's clear enough as it is if you realize the context that Plato and Seneca and others had been arguing (that the best cannot be excelled) but today that just strikes us as a word game that's hardly worthy of a response.