

Episode Ninety-Three: Torquatus Leads Us Forward Into Conflict Over Epicurean Ethics

Post by "Cassius" of October 28, 2021 at 6:49 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

. That doesn't mean the pleasure of intoxication doesn't feel pleasurable in the moment. It's just maybe not a good choice. That doesn't mean the pleasure is greater or lesser.

We're at an impasse for the moment due to the flat way you make this observation (that there is no greater or lesser pleasure), but I am confident that we will break through it over time.

My position at the moment remains that philosophically "all pleasure is good" and "all goods are good," but that from the "perspective of real life," "some things that are good are better than others" and therefore "some pleasures are more pleasing (greater) than others."

And when I refer to "from the perspective of real life" this is one of those areas where I think there is no satisfactory way for words to capture the full depth of "better" or "more pleasing" other than to broadly indicate that there are degrees. In an analogy to mathematics I would say that words can model real life just like math can model real life, but they are not equivalent and cannot capture the complete issue. I cannot measure or fully understand the difference in pleasure that, for example, Martin may get from vanilla ice cream than I do.

Therefore also I would say that "pleasure is the (highest) good" is a perfectly appropriate way to respond to "holiness is the (highest) good" or "rationality is the (highest) good."

But as another example, I would also say that "pleasure is the good" is not what Torquatus (and we can assume he as an Epicurean par excellence for this analogy) would say to his army as he was directing his son to be executed for disobeying orders.

Torquatus might later deliver a philosophy lesson in which he explained that what he was doing was for the sake of pleasure, yes, but he would not likely choose to describe his analysis in that way at the moment that he was requiring his orders be carried out. He would more likely remind his men and his son of the relative differences in the various pleasures and pains of life and rank them (with the safety of his country as a higher pleasure than the safety of his son) as explanation for what he was doing.