

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

Post by "Cassius" of October 29, 2021 at 10:53 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

s that your position is that some pleasures are "better"/"greater" than others: e g., Eating chocolate candies is "better" than eating coffee candies (for you). Pleasures can be "ranked."

I think our key here is that I am distinguishing "better" from "greater." I use "better" when I mean to refer to some kind of intrinsic "nobler" or "worthier," and I am not meaning to refer to that in terms of pleasure, so I don't call one pleasure "better" than another unless I am trying to be very clear that "better" is subjective and really means something else (more intense, longer lasting, or some other feeling.)

When referring to "greater" I think that is more clear. A "greater pleasure" is to me something that has those same attributes (more intense, longer lasting, or some other feeling).

I think in regard to that distinction we are really talking subtle preferences in words.

[Quote from Don](#)

My position is that ranking pleasures into a hierarchy is a pointless exercise. All things which give pleasure give pleasure, period, by definition.

I am pretty sure we do disagree here. Eating chocolate candy is a pleasure. Pursuing philosophy or some other hobby is a pleasure. I clearly and emphatically in my own life would rank the pleasure of pursuing philosophy or the hobby in a hierarchy such that I devote much more time and attention to it than to eating candy.

Maybe we again have a subtle word issue but I have no problem describing that process as "ranking pleasures in a hierarchy" and I would think that Epicurus is implicitly urging everyone to perform that same calculation process for themselves, just as he did in pursuing his philosophic campaign rather than lounging in the garden all day eating figs.