

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

Post by "Don" of October 29, 2021 at 2:19 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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

Subtle but important. I think we're getting somewhere now though! 😊

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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.)

Cool. Okay, I think I'm good with that. So, "better" is just a subjective feeling and not a value judgement. "I like to eat chocolate *better* than coffee candy" is a fine sentence to use in everyday life. Or even "Chocolate candy is *better* than coffee candy" is fine as well as a subjective emotional personal reaction to an experience. And you're using "greater" as a synonym for "better" in this narrow, subjective sense? If that's your take, we're sympatico here.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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.

Ah! Here we go! The ranking is where our two roads are diverging. Why do you insist a "ranking" is necessary? (Are you?)

You mention that the pleasure of pursuing philosophy is "higher" in your hierarchy of pleasurable activities than eating candy? As if it was predetermined or (gasp) ordained that this is so. 😊

I would say you've simply determined, through reasoned, prudent application of seeing the goal as the pursuit of a pleasurable life, that the pleasure of studying philosophy will lead more assuredly and more efficaciously to a pleasurable life than the mere eating of candy will. You still enjoy eating candy, right? It's still pleasurable? You are just going to devote more time to

something (i.e., philosophy) that will be of more help in leading you toward the goal of having a pleasurable life than you will indulging in some candy now and then.

My point is that it doesn't matter where a specific pleasurable activity falls in some conceptual hierarchy that you might sit down and construct. I realize you haven't (I'm assuming) sat down and categorized ALL the possible pleasures in your life into a concrete, written hierarchy that you consult in making a decision. You determine, at any given minute, this is a choice I can make that will lead to a pleasurable life. The hard thing is to do this deliberately, prudently, and consciously and not be buffeted by the winds of fate and chance, pushed along mindlessly. That's where I get that Epicureanism is a philosophy of personal responsibility for one's actions and decisions.

Now, if saying the pursuit of philosophy is a "greater" pleasure than eating candy is your shorthand for that wordy paragraph, we're on the same page. 😎



If not, let the games continue