

An Epicurean Understanding of Valentine's Day: Love, Romance, and Free-will

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2022 at 4:57 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I keep coming back to Usener Fragment 67:

"For I at least do not even know what I should conceive the good to be, if I eliminate the pleasures of taste, and eliminate the pleasures of sex, and eliminate the pleasures of listening, and eliminate the pleasant motions caused in our vision by a visible form."

I wasn't sure which fragment you were going to cite, Don, when I started reading your post, so I was getting ready to pull the trigger on another "always be prudent about pulling quotes out of context post" ----

But this particular fragment is so utterly and broadly and obviously consistent with the rest of the philosophy, and seems to me to be so strongly compelled by the epistemology and the ethics and the physics all at the same time, that I think it really is among those that is the most basic and unchallengable.

Any legitimate concept of "the good" in Epicurean terms is ultimately and intimately tied to our feelings of pleasure and pain that occur when we engage in it. We don't accept good and bad by a priori formulas and logical reasoning about what "should" be the result of something, especially since there is no "fate" that predetermines outcomes in most human affairs (with the exception of such things as death). Our relations with our friends and family and opposite sex aren't pre-determined liked death, and it seems to me that each one is going to be an individual matter of "hedonic calculus" .

But DARN I hate the words "hedonic" and "hedonic calculus." It's much more accurate to say something like "Epicurean calculus." The philosophy is EPICUREAN philosophy, not "Pleasurism" -- we frequently (and ought to always!) choose short-term pain over short-term pleasure when greater pleasure in the end is the result of the choice. Yes in the end it comes down to pleasure over pain, and pleasure is the goal and the end, but in common communication the word "Epicurean" conveys the result a lot more accurately than does "hedonic."