

Perspectives On "Proving" That Pleasure is "The Good"

Post by "Don" of December 21, 2022 at 11:29 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

In his Epistle to Menoikeus, Epicurus declares ΗΔΟΝΗ ("pleasure") to be the ΠΡΟΤΟΝ ΑΓΑΘΟΝ the "first good". Interestingly

Here's my commentary from my translation on that phrase:

129a. ταύτην γὰρ ἀγαθὸν πρῶτον καὶ συγγενικὸν ἔγνωμεν,

ἀγαθὸν πρῶτον "fundamental/primary good"

Remember πρῶτον from way back in 123b! (Note: This refers to the place in the letter that many translators use "First, ..." I disagree with that ordinal number approach since he never uses a number elsewhere.) Since it's used there and here, I contend that, in neither place, is it meant to convey "first" as an ordinal number but rather "fundamental, primary"

...

129b.ii. καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτην καταντῶμεν ὡς κανόνι τῷ πάθει πᾶν ἀγαθὸν κρίνοντες.

- "and against this (ἐπὶ ταύτην)
- κανόνι τῷ πάθει "by the standard of feeling (i.e., pleasure and pain, the pathe)"; "by the standard of the reaction (singular) we have of pleasure or pain"
 - ...
- κρίνοντες "judging, deciding + (accusative" πᾶν ἀγαθὸν "every good thing," i.e., "every pleasure" against or by the κανόνι τῷ πάθει "the standard of how we react to what happens to us when we experience - or consider experiencing - that specific good thing.
- "And against this (that pleasure is a fundamental good and common to our nature), judging every good thing (i.e., every possible pleasurable experience) by the standard of how that pleasure affects us or how we react to considering experiencing that pleasure."

129c. Καὶ ἐπεὶ πρῶτον ἀγαθὸν τοῦτο καὶ σύμφυτον,

- σύμφυτον "born with, congenital, natural, inborn", takes the place in this phrase of συγγενικὸν above (129a.)
- "And because this (pleasure) is the fundamental/primary and inborn good..."

129. Because we perceived pleasure as a fundamental good and common to our nature, and so, as a result of this, we begin every choice and rejection against this, judging every good thing

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(πᾶν ἀγαθόν) by the standard of how that pleasure affects us or how we react to considering experiencing that pleasure. And because pleasure is the fundamental and inborn good, this is why not every pleasure is seized and we pass by many pleasures when greater unpleasant things were to result for us as a result: and we think many pains better than pleasures whenever greater pleasure were to follow for a longer time by patiently abiding the pain.