

Thomas Carnes - Keeping the Friend in Epicurean Friendship

Post by "Cassius" of July 9, 2023 at 3:59 PM

Wow great post! This is such a an important point, and you do a great job of linking it to the specifics of friendship, like it should be linked to everything else:

[Quote from warjuning](#)

just because something is relative, it does not mean it is not objective and real. They seem to think that if the person does not possess intrinsic value outside of its relations, then it cannot possess it in its relations either. But I think that an Epicurean response could address that presupposition by pointing out that relative properties can truly belong to an object, personal or not, due to their causal contribution (if I got this right. I have Polystratus' reasoning in mind).

Epicurus does not say that just because something is the abstract product of experience and reflection over time that it is not "real" and that we should not consider it capable of generating pleasure and pain that are also very real to us.

I see this as a subset of the phrase I am pilfering from David Sedley that Epicurus was not a radical atomic reductionist. Even though it is true that only atoms have an eternal unchanging existence, the "qualities" that emerge from combinations of atoms have just as much "truth" to them as do the atoms themselves, and it is wrong for us to act as if our level of existence is less "important" to us than the atomic level. The pleasure and pain that result from friendship relationships may not have the same permanence as the atoms themselves, but they are among the most important to us in life.