

Tips On Offsetting Pleasures Against Pains

Post by “Don” of November 28, 2023 at 1:22 PM

[Cassius](#) : I may be misinterpreting where you're going, and I think I agree with the direction I think you're headed. So, with those caveats, I'll add the following:

I agree it does no one any good to use jargon and technical terms (in this case, Ancient Greek words) in a context meant to be understandable by "the average person" who speaks/reads English in an attempt to explain ideas to them. Likewise, someone who wants to explain philosophical or scientific ideas should be able to do so at a number of levels, jargon-free and aimed at a particular audience. I'm thinking specifically of videos I've seen online like *The Flame Challenge* (explaining complex science to children, judged by children: [2014 Winner "What is Color?"](#)) or WIRED Magazine's "[Astrophysicist Explains Gravity in 5 Levels of Difficulty](#)." It's an application of the [Feynman Technique](#). Or as Kurt Vonnegut writes in *Cat's Cradle: Dr. Hoenikker used to say that any scientist who couldn't explain to an eight-year-old what he was doing was a charlatan.*

So, using words like *katastematic*, *ataraxia*, *prolepsis*, etc. can be a helpful shield in protecting someone who really doesn't understand - or *thinks* they understand - what those terms mean but knows how to bandy them around to sound erudite or at least make it sound like they know what they're talking about. Full disclosure: I ****firmly**** include myself in this camp from time to time. I *think* I know what they mean. BUT, if so, I should be able to explain them in "plain English."

One issue is that these terms are convenient shortcuts, both for good and for less good purposes. If I have to say every time "a mind free from anxiety and fear of the gods and death" versus "ataraxia," that eats up a lot more words. And is "a mind free from anxiety and fear of the gods and death" really enough? Maybe I need to include "fear from anxiety about what happens after you die as well as fear of the gods retribution after you die as well as anxiety about fate and destiny and predestination and..." Or just say "ataraxia." It's a powerful pull toward just *using* the word... but then we're back to square one. Same for *katastematic*. Same for *prolepsis*. Same for (fill in the blank).

That said, by only using regular English words, one obscures what the ancient writers are talking about. As an example, where translators may use happiness, well-being, joy, pleasure... you look at the ancient texts and lo and behold, it's the SAME word in all those places. Using regular English words can be as obfuscating to the meaning of the subject as using the Ancient Greek words.

Have I resolved anything? Of course not! 😊 But I think a case can be made for explaining topics jargon-free but also at some point, the actual Ancient Greek words have to be understood. They are a very convenient short-hand AFTER the topics are explained.

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3556-tips-on-offsetting-pleasures-against-pains/?postID=27751#post27751>