

Epicurean philosophy vs. Stoicism in public popularity

Post by “Elayne” of March 20, 2021 at 8:14 AM

[Don](#) No, a descriptor is not the same as a qualifier. A qualifier, as you accurately say, limits or modifies -- and I am doing neither. If my description were a qualifier, it would mean that I am not only doing as I please but am limiting or modifying my scope of action beyond doing as I please. And that's not the case.

In PD5, Epicurus does not idealize the words prudently, morally, and justly. He doesn't put forth a concept of prudence that would result in the same action for every human in every situation. This is an example of why it's important to recall the context of the entire philosophy, which is without such absolutes.

We actually do have evidence that psychopaths lack vicarious pain and can even feel pleasure instead. I stand by my assertion that for feeling, only the person actually experiencing the feeling knows what it is, exactly. But we do have supportive research. It's important not to extrapolate feelings you or I might have to those of psychopaths. I think that leads to errors in predicting their behavior towards us. <https://www.webmd.com/brain/news/201...-feel-your-pain>

I am going to be bold and say that for any specific behavior/virtue you want to name as universally leading to a maximally pleasurable human life, I can name an exception. Virtues depend on pleasure for their very definition-- but feeling is a direct experience and can't be defined away. This is central to understanding Epicurus.

In fact, this issue is key to the differences between us and Stoics, and in the difficulties we face in attracting as much interest. People resist understanding that nothing defines pleasure other than the direct experience. Maximum pleasure is not modified or limited by definitions or concepts-- it simply occurs or does not.

I think it's our culture having integrated so much Stoic and Platonic thought that makes people resist this reality-- even here, on an Epicurean platform! But it's possible there is some evolved neuro-developmental barrier as well.