

Epicurean philosophy vs. Stoicism in public popularity

Post by “Cassius” of March 20, 2021 at 10:01 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

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 this is particularly well stated and important. And I also think that it is good that Don continues to respond on this point because if there is any that we need to be as sharp as possible in explaining, it is probably this one. At least from where i sit, that is the best interpretation I have of Don's viewpoint --- we seem to be wrestling over whether it is every proper to generalize that a standard of conduct is so reliably productive of pleasure that it can be generalized into being always virtuous, or whether crossing that line is always going to violate other Epicurean observations about the contextual nature of feeling and nature itself.

That's what I get out of:

[Quote from Don](#)

The reason that those life choices can be cautioned against is that they do not - from observation over time and multiple instances - do not reliably lead to a lifetime of pleasure. Trying to say that they do or can is living in a utopian hypothetical fantasy world.

And that is why Elayne is (in my view) responding properly with:

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Can't be defined away, and can't be predicted with certainty because there is no "necessity" or "fate" involved to require the outcome.