

# New Annual Event - The "Bread And Water Multimedia Award" - Nominations for 2021 Award (to be selected in December) Now Open!

Post by "Cassius" of April 27, 2021 at 8:46 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

if it was necessary,

And I think that "IF" is the key. It's not necessary; Epicurus knows it's not necessary; we know it's not necessary; everyone knows it's not necessary -- so why say something that everyone knows to the point of the observation being trite? I think there's a good answer to that question, and I think the answer is that Epicurus sees the importance in engaging in the "hypotheticals" game - the game of abstractions which can easily lead to disaster, but which most people are taken in by to some degree, and which therefore has to be deprogrammed from him.

I don't think Epicurus ever meant anyone to even dream of only eating bread and water, and he himself certainly did not. But by engaging in the hypothetical you meet Plato head-on and beat him at his own game.

Unfortunately the hazard we are experiencing is that if your explanatory books get purged out of existence, and Platonists completely take over the world, then people stop understanding the context of your statement, and think you are being literal, and then either dismiss you as ridiculous or interpret you in a way that makes sense to them, but turns your own views upside down.

[Quote from Don](#)

listen to his body's natural limit and not eat to the point of pain

Isn't that another observation that is so borderline "childish" that it is a good clue that something more profound is intended? How many people after they pass the age of five or six fail to understand that overeating ice cream leads to pain? Yes, some of us do it anyway, but we certainly understand the likely result of our actions and don't have anyone to blame but ourselves if we overeat anyway.

The best explanation for those observations is what I think Torquatus said, which is that the discussion allows us to see "the principle of the classification" -

Quote

<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/1978-new-annual-event-the-bread-and-water-multimedia-award-nominations-for-2021-award/?postID=11974#post11974>

One kind he classified as both natural and necessary, a second as natural without being necessary, and a third as neither natural nor necessary; the principle of classification being that the necessary desires are gratified with little trouble or expense; the natural desires also require but little, since nature's own riches, which suffice to content her, are both easily procured and limited in amount; but for the imaginary desires no bound or limit can be discovered.

So I think one of the major principles behind the differences of opinion that people have (which I am often referring to as the "ascetic" vs the "classical" model) is that because people are not approaching these texts as a "principled" or a "philosophical" dispute, they are trying to interpret these words as immediate practical advice.

This is a big mistake because what they are instead is really the high-level abstractions that are needed if you are debating with [Philebus](#) and Socrates, and talking about the "summum bonum" or the "*the final and ultimate Good, which as philosophers are agreed must be of such a nature as to be the End to which all other things are means, while it is not itself a means to anything else.*"

When you are debating with Plato on the summum bonum, you talk in terms of "pleasure" and "pain" and "natural" and "necessary" and "limits" and "vain" other such words which are loaded with philosophical meaning, but not with "practical meaning" unless you place them in an individual context. The letter to Menoeceus from which most of these issues spring is an extremely high-level discussion of the goal of life and the "principles" to follow. If you try to read it as a "[to-do list](#) that everyone should follow today" then you end up with bread and water in your cave, instead of living the rich and full life that Epicurus certainly would have intended.