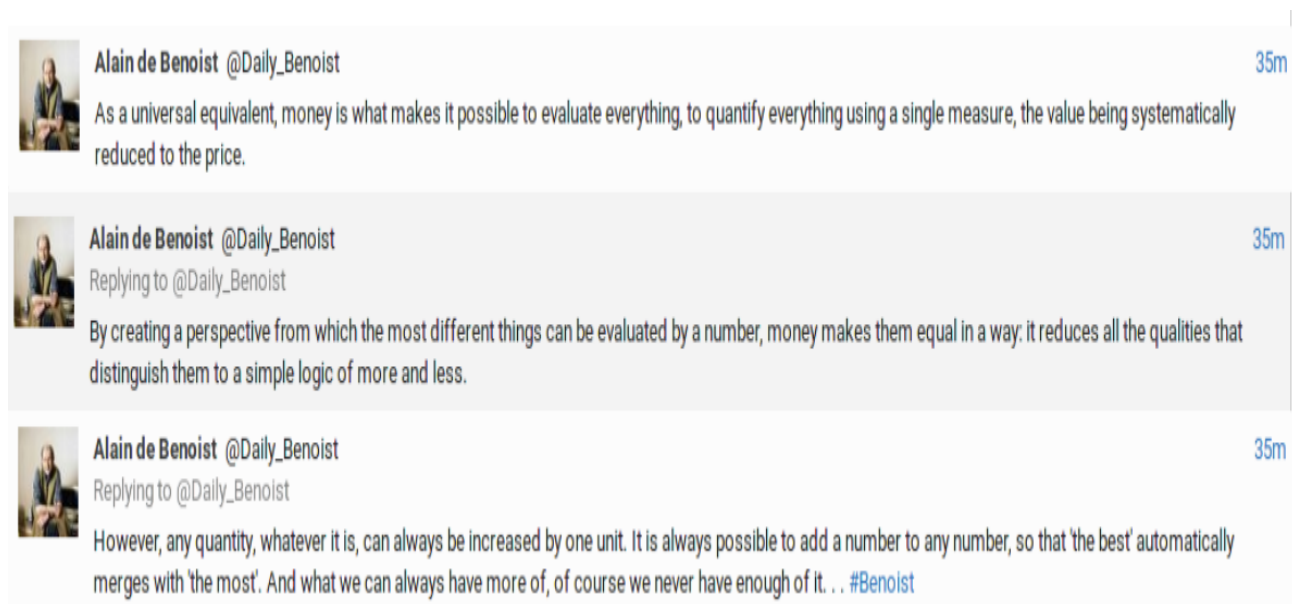


Epicurus On Money, And A Connection With Limits Referenced By A Modern Philosopher

Post by "Cassius" of June 11, 2021 at 8:29 AM

I really do not know much of anything about "Alain de Benoist" other than that he seems to be somewhat well known, and three tweets sent today crossed my timeline. So I will issue the standard disclaimer that I am not endorsing anything else whatsoever about this person other than that these tweets below hold some interest from an Epicurean perspective. I post them here because I think he is at or near a point that Epicurus probably would agree with, even if not stated explicitly in the surviving texts, in regard to the hazard of how pursuit of money "**reduces all the qualities that distinguish them (different desirable things) to a simple logic of more or less.**" Here are the tweets:



The image shows a screenshot of three tweets from Alain de Benoist (@Daily_Benoist). Each tweet is timestamped as 35m. The first tweet states: "As a universal equivalent, money is what makes it possible to evaluate everything, to quantify everything using a single measure, the value being systematically reduced to the price." The second tweet is a reply to the first and says: "By creating a perspective from which the most different things can be evaluated by a number, money makes them equal in a way: it reduces all the qualities that distinguish them to a simple logic of more and less." The third tweet is also a reply to the first and says: "However, any quantity, whatever it is, can always be increased by one unit. It is always possible to add a number to any number, so that 'the best' automatically merges with 'the most'. And what we can always have more of, of course we never have enough of it. . . #Benoist"

I think these comments are correct and that this is one of the very dangerous aspects of the pursuit of money, with which Epicurus would agree due to his focus on identifying the proper limits of all things to pursue. Desirable things vary dramatically in many of their qualities, and it is dangerous to reduce them to an abstraction - any abstraction - such as "money." It might (or would?) even be dangerous to reduce desirable things the single measurement of "pleasure," except that pleasure is a feeling that we experience directly without abstract reasoning, which is why it is among the elements of the Epicurean "Canon of Truth."

For comparison, I pulled together some directly Epicurean quotes on money. If anyone has any comments on the problem of "reducing all qualities to a simple logic of more and less" please let me know:

Quote

Epicurus VS43 - The love of money, if unjustly gained, is impious, and, if justly, shameful; for it is unseemly to be merely parsimonious even with justice on one's side.

Cicero's Torquatus, On Ends: And how is it possible that wicked actions can ever have as much influence towards alleviating [pg 117] the annoyances of life, as they must have towards increasing them from the consciousness of our actions, and also from the punishments inflicted by the laws and the hatred of the citizens? And yet, in some people, there is no moderation in their passion for money and for honour and for command, or in their lusts and greediness and other desires, which acquisitions, however wickedly made, do not at all diminish, but rather inflame, so that it seems we ought rather to restrain such men than to think that we can teach them better. Therefore sound wisdom invites sensible men to justice, equity, and good faith.

Cicero, _On End-Goals, Good and Bad,_ II.17.55: According to your {Epicurean} school, it is right to try to get money even at some risk; for money procures many very delightful pleasures.

Seneca, _Letters to Lucilius,_ 21.7: In order that Idomeneus may not be introduced free of charge into my letter, he shall make up the indebtedness from his own account. It was to him that Epicurus addressed his well-known saying, urging him to make Pythocles rich, but not rich in the vulgar and equivocal way. "If you wish to make Pythocles rich," said he, "do not add to his store of money, but subtract from his desires."

Porphyry, _On Abstinence,_ I.54 (I hesitate to post this as clearly Epicurean, but I'll post it FWIW): From causes like these, and from analogous causes, there arises an insatiable desire for longevity, wealth, money and fame, because people think that with these they will, given a longer time, increase their sum of good, and because they fear the terror of death as something without limit. The pleasure experienced from luxury comes nowhere near the pleasure experienced from self-sufficiency; it is very pleasant to think just how little one needs. Take away luxury, take away sexual excitement and the desire for external recognition, and what further need is there for inert wealth, which is useful to us for nothing but only weighs us down? This is the way to be filled full, and the pleasure from this kind of satiety is unmixed. We must also make the body unaccustomed, so far as is possible, to the pleasures of excess, but accustomed to the fulfillment which comes from satisfying hunger; we must eat in order to get through everything, and must take as our limit not the unlimited, but the necessary. Thus it too, by self-sufficiency and assimilation to the divine, can obtain the good that is possible for it. Thus it will be genuinely rich, measuring its wealth by the natural limit, not by empty beliefs. Thus it will not be suspended on hopes of the greatest pleasure, without

being sure of getting it; for that pleasure causes maximum disruption. But it will be self-sufficient in what is present and in what has already happened, and will not be tormented by the thought of not remaining for longer.

U567 **Diogenes Laertius, _Lives of Philosophers, _ X.121:** He will earn money, if he should be in poverty, but only for his wisdom.

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