

# Episode Ninety-Seven - The Virtues as Instrumental For Pleasure: Temperance and Courage

Post by "Cassius" of December 8, 2021 at 2:17 PM

I don't mean this to be arguing with Kalosyni in any way but the quote (which is a good find) seems to me to be very helpful in explaining my contrarian view:

Quote

The poet Eubulus noted that three bowls (kylikes) were the ideal amount of wine to consume. The quantity of three bowls to represent moderation is a recurring theme throughout Greek writing (today, the standard 750 ml bottle contains roughly three to six glasses of wine, depending on serving size).[1] In his c. 375 BC play Semele or Dionysus, Eubulus has Dionysus say:

"Three bowls do I mix for the temperate: one to health, which they empty first; the second to love and pleasure; the third to sleep. When this bowl is drunk up, wise guests go home. The fourth bowl is ours no longer, but belongs to violence; the fifth to uproar; the sixth to drunken revel; the seventh to black eyes; the eighth is the policeman's; the ninth belongs to biliousness; and the tenth to madness and the hurling of furniture."

These guys are fooling no one but themselves if they think that there is an ideal of "moderation" or "ideal quantity" that has some absolute value separate from circumstances that can be referenced by referring to "moderation" in and of itself. Instead, what there is in place of that is always a quantity that makes sense based on context, which varies by fact. In this case, the proper quantity varies with things like the weight of the drinker, their built-up tolerance to alcohol, and other aspects of bodily chemistry that varies by individual. Sure you can generalize that "most people" are going to fall within certain variable limits, but that is further evidence that circumstances determine the result, not some pre-defined concept of "moderation" or "temperance" or any other similar word that comes to mind.

The other virtues are subject to the same qualification and limitation, but "temperance" or "moderation" seems to me to have not even a veneer of common sense about it. In fact it's almost a vice in itself - to look to some kind of predefined quantity rather than the right quantity that is desirable under the circumstances.

The more I think about it, I will repeat, the more I think this concern applies to all of the virtues, but I think I've seen this one praised casually too many times on facebook by Aristotelians and the supporters of the standard establishment Greek philosophers to consider it more charitably



But I do think Goldwater had it very wrong too -- you wouldn't want to be or to praise "extremism" any more than you would want to be "moderate" - both are predefined reactionary perspectives divorced from the circumstances.

If it were me it would be more like "Vigor in the pursuit of liberty is no vice, moderation in the pursuit of justice no virtue."