

PD19 And The Meaning Of No "Greater" Pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of August 11, 2022 at 6:16 AM

Last night in our Wednesday Zoom meeting we discussion [PD19](#) and [PD20](#), and I have to say that I think many of us (including me) could do a lot to improve our explanation of what these doctrines, and especially [PD20](#) really means. I don't think many of us (again including me) are as quick as we should be to be able to explain what Epicurus' attitude toward "variation" and really was, and whether variation is to be looked on as desirable or not. A very similar issue is Epicurus' attitude toward the length of time of pleasure. Is pleasure of a longer time desirable over pleasure of a shorter time?

The primary issue is that I think we can expect most "regular people" to interpret "Infinite time contains no greater pleasure than limited time, if one measures, by reason, the limits of pleasure." (Bailey) as very close to patently false and nonsensical on its face. They will reason that longer time periods afford more opportunity for pleasure over time, and that more pleasure over time equates to "greater" pleasure. I do not think that interpretation is an unreasonable construction, so if we intend to communicate with people of ordinary experience and understanding, we have to be able to provide an explanation of how "measuring the limits of pleasure by reason" make such an observation supportable.

Personally I think it is absolutely inadequate - and not what Epicurus meant - to try to say something like "The limit of pleasure is met when pain is absent and so therefore once you obtain painlessness for a moment if does you no good to live a longer time." I do not think that is what Epicurus meant, but even assuming for a moment that that is what he meant, I don't find that explanation at all satisfying myself, and I would not ask a hypothetical "younger person studying Epicurean philosophy - or anyone else - to accept it.

Therefore I would like to use this thread to get suggestions as to the best way to explain this doctrine. Before I launch off into what i would suggest myself I will let this thread simmer for a while and see if we can get some suggestions. Don't be afraid to submit them even if they are only half thought out, or to say that you do or don't find the suggestions that are made to be satisfying, because this is a very complicated issue.