

PD19 And The Meaning Of No "Greater" Pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of August 21, 2022 at 8:56 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

Basically, once the glass is full, it's full. Whether the glass stays full a day or an infinite time, it's the same volume. That's the "limit" of pleasure: the full glass.

... Which is a far superior and more clear way to state the proposition rather than saying "Once the glass is totally empty, it's totally empty. Whether the glass stays empty for a day or for an infinite time, it's the same volume."

The latter formula may also be true, but it conveys a totally different attitude. Those "absence of" descriptions work ONLY if you vigorously keep in the front of your mind that since there are only two feelings, then when you are not feeling pains you are feeling pleasures. If you don't have that Epicurean premise front and center, then it looks like you are investing mystical qualities in "emptiness" or even "nothingness". It seems that was possible for the ancient Epicureans, but very hard for us to day, given our lack of full explanations from the texts and our overall more negative attitude toward pleasure.

Those latter formulas (emptiness and nothingness) are of great appeal to Buddhists and Nihilists and others who are unhappy with what they think they see in life, but not at all representative of what a philosophy of pleasure would look like.

It is impossible for me to believe that the Romans who enthusiastically adopted Epicurus interpreted him through the "emptiness" / "nothingness" metaphor.

The Romans - who had the texts and the teachers - understood it as Cicero described it from the positive perspective: "A life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures."

and

XII. The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit

of further improvement.