

An Epicurean Study of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics

Post by "Cassius" of October 29, 2022 at 8:03 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

So, yeah, I found book 1 both intriguing but frustrating in Aristotle's insistence on the subservience of the individual's "good", goal, telos being subservient to the state.

But is that my modern, Western bias or is that coming from a genuine Epicurean perspective

I could see Epicurus holding that for individuals who do in fact find their greatest happiness in being part of a particular group of people, then for those people they are pursuing pleasure by pursuing their collectively defined interests.

But I would also expect Epicurus to hold that for those individuals who do not find their greatest happiness in a particular group of people, or who find their greatest happiness in another or smaller or separate group of people than "the polis," then the interests of the polis would not be their primary concern.

To hold otherwise would be to allow for something else other than the feeling of the person perceiving the feeling to override the guidance of nature. I read Epicurus as being rigorously logical that there can be no possible exception to the general rule that Nature gives humans only feeling (pleasure and pain) for guidance. I do not think Epicurus would admit that polis / states are living beings which have feelings of their own.

States may be the most efficient method of organization of large groups of people for living happily, but they are not strictly necessary for human survival so I bet he would say that they don't count in the same way that "life" is a prerequisite to pleasure. Like "virtue" I would expect Epicurus to see states as a tool and not as an end in themselves.