

The Definitive "Chrysippus' Hand Argument" Thread

Post by "Joshua" of April 18, 2023 at 10:04 PM

Premises;

1. The hand either feels pleasure, or it feels pain, or it feels neither pleasure nor pain.
2. If pleasure is the highest good, then the absence of pleasure would feel like a lack of pleasure.
3. This lack of pleasure would be felt in every member of the body.
4. My hand does not feel pleasure or pain.
5. My hand does not feel a lack of pleasure.

Conclusion;

1. Pleasure is not the highest good.

Against premises 1, 2, and 4:

(Principle Doctrine 3) "The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain. When such pleasure is present, so long as it is uninterrupted, there is no pain either of body or of mind or of both together."

Torquatus grants premise 3:

"The inference is shrewd enough as against the Cyrenaics, but does not touch Epicurus. For if the only pleasure were that which, as it were, tickles the senses, if I may say so, and attended by sweetness overflows them and insinuates itself into them, neither the hand nor any other member would be able to rest satisfied with the absence of pain apart from a joyous activity of pleasure."

The wisdom of granting this premise is, in my view, questionable. Premise 5 relies upon it for relevance, and I think it has problems. For example; I can feel pain from teeth, but unlike other organs the teeth do not register actively pleasureable sensations. Should the teeth, not equipped with the ability to register pleasure, feel the lack of pleasure? I don't see how.

Against premise 5;

Premise 5 relies on the previous premises 1-4 for relevance. Given the challenges presented above, premise 5 is inadmissible.