

The Definitive "Chrysippus' Hand Argument" Thread

Post by "Cassius" of April 19, 2023 at 2:34 PM

Yes, but as you quoted above, it seems that Chrysippus thought that the following argument is self-contained:

C: Does your hand, being in its present condition, feel the lack of anything at all?

S: Certainly of nothing.

C: But if pleasure were the supreme good, it would feel a lack.

S: I agree.

C: Pleasure then is not the supreme good.

And that seems to imply that the "absence of lack" is the critical issue. He does not seem to me to be arguing about what to call the absence of lack, it is the absence of lack itself that he thinks says something.

Yes he would presumably and eventually agree with Cicero and argue that the absence of lack should not be called pleasure, but he seems to think already that the absence of lack speaks for itself as to why pleasure is not the highest good. As you also indicated earlier, I see no reason why the highest good should be required to be always present. There seems to be an element missing in Chrysippus' argument that would explain why he thinks it must always be present. The only possibility I can think of is the implicit requirement that the highest good (or the guide to the highest good) must be always available in order for it to meet some definition that Chrysippus thinks is agreed upon as to the nature of the highest good or guide to the highest good.

Is there any other possible reason for his argument? He could have simply said "the absence of any feeling is not pleasure and no one thinks of it that way" if his argument was over nothing more than what to call the state being discussed. That's what Cicero eventually argued, but Chrysippus does not seem to be saying that. He is saying that the "absence of lack" means something in and of itself as to why pleasure is not the good.