

Episode 174 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 26

- Chapter 12 - The New Hedonism 03

Post by "Cassius" of May 19, 2023 at 9:11 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

But pleasure, as a feeling, is limited to the point where there is no pain, when the body is satiated. Full satisfaction is the limit of pleasure.

Yep and that observation neatly meets the objection that pleasure has no limit or no end, and that for practical purposes (the limited life of humans) the human goal of pleasurable living CAN'T infinitely be made better. At some point every day and in your life you're full -- or as Joshua added in the podcast, you meet your final limit - death.

But it's also important that our calling this out amounts to engaging in "argument through logic" which to me is entirely separate from the argument from practical observation of nature. This is an argument that is essential to defeat Plato and Seneca, but unfortunately, if you separate out the "argument through logic" and don't explain the context, you're left fixated on a "limit" as if that is the only issue involved, when most assuredly there are many other and more important issues that don't end up being confusing in isolation.

If we talk about pigs and babies and real living things, it's much harder to think in terms of their day to day practical goal being well defined by discussing "limits." The logic argument is invaluable in its context, but can't be taken as the ultimate reasoning. I think Epicurus engaged in it, and we have to also, because we are faced with the necessity of fighting on logical terms if we want to communicate with people who are interested in ideas, but that doesn't mean that the whole exercise isn't hazardous for both sides. It's easy to omit important points and end up looking bad when taken out of context.

Quote from Torquatus

So he says we need no reasoning or debate to shew why pleasure is matter for desire, pain for aversion. These facts he thinks are simply perceived, just as the fact that fire is hot, snow is white, and honey sweet, no one of which facts are we bound to support by elaborate arguments; it is enough merely to draw attention to the fact; and there is a difference between proof and formal argument on the one hand and a slight hint and direction of the attention on the other; the one process reveals to us mysteries and things under a veil, so to speak; the other enables us to pronounce upon patent and evident facts.

Also:

[Quote from Don](#)

conflating (on purpose) pleasure and desire. The *desire* for pleasure is infinite

It may well help us to distinguish pleasure and desire like that, but I don't think it would help Plato or Seneca for the reason you mentioned -- they are conflating things *on purpose* because they want to defend their own "god" (virtue, wisdom, etc) as the ultimate end. If you were to point out to them the distinction between pleasure and desire they would just shift off in another direction with another similar argument, maybe reminding you that cows have similar limits, but are you a cow? 😊

There's ultimately no satisfying these people because they have made up their minds and they are not going to change. But we can help a lot of other people - open-minded people - by explaining these issues, so they don't end up confused and lost like [Philebus](#) was at the end of that dialogue.