

# **Episode 176 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 28**

## **- Chapter 12 - The New Hedonism 05**

**Post by "Godfrey" of June 1, 2023 at 4:25 PM**

Some thoughts on the neutral state:

What are the limits of the neutral state?

To me, insisting on a neutral state is a means of jackhammering all of the subtlety out of Epicurean ethics (something which the "insufferable" Cicero loves to do). First, it removes the usefulness of pleasure and pain as guides unless you can determine the limits of pleasure, pain *and* the neutral state. Practically speaking, when I was new to this philosophy and began to examine the supposed neutral state, I discovered that it is more properly described as the "oblivious state". The more that I looked, the more pleasure and pain I discovered in what I previously would have considered to be without feeling, and the more information I realized was available for exploring the guidance of the feelings. A classic method of negating any idea that one opposes is to reduce it to a slogan, and in fact this is what the neutral state is if you look closely.

The affective circumplex illustrates this well. An opponent of Epicurus might say that the point 0,0 is the neutral state and that the goal is to hit and remain at that target. This bothered me when I first encountered the circumplex. But if you attempt to pinpoint any point on the circumplex you soon see that you really can't: each point represents a fleeting moment in time. As you try to zero in on any particular point in the circumplex you realize that your attention to the subtlety of the feelings must increase the closer you get to the point that you are trying to pin down. 0,0 is simply the limit of either side of the axes.