

Best Way to Introduce Teachings?

Post by "Cassius" of March 16, 2019 at 4:15 PM

As far as observations and consequences, it seems to me that that is so clearly of importance to be unquestionable. In fact, seeing your cites, it seems to me that probably Frances Wright incorporated some of that in her discussion of causation in *A Few Days in Athens*. And those influences shouldn't be surprising since she dedicated her work to Jeremy Bentham (and so she certainly shared your enthusiasm for at least some of that work).

As to holding the happiness of the entire world as equal to that of my own and my family and friends, that's equally clear - but in the reverse -- most people do not hold to that opinion at all except an abstract ideal that they know does not comport with reality. In fact, that seems to me to be much more of an artifact of Christianity or some other type of universalist religion than something that I observe to be true.

I guess you could say that because I believe in observations and in observing the consequences of actions in the real world, I could never hold the happiness of every member of the entire human race in abstract as entitled to my equal concern as the happiness of my family and friends. And of course taken to its logical conclusion, the happiness of the "greatest number" FAR outweighs the happiness of myself and my friends, in quantity.

Which is why Daniel, with all due respect to you, I have always found the idea of "the greatest good for the greatest number" to be nonsense, or worse. It seems to me that it's a prescription for the worst kind of totalitarian despotism which could only work by a small elite deciding what the "greatest good of the greatest number" is by fiat, and then enforcing that (by force) on everyone else.

But regardless of whether I am right or wrong on that, the most important part is that I do observe that not everyone agrees with that formula. So to subject ourselves to that formula while the great bulk of humanity rejects it seems to me to be foolhardy at best. But since I am sure that the originators of Utilitarianism were no fools, just like the founders of Abrahamism were no fools, I feel sure that they had another agenda -- likely the same agenda as the Abrahamists. And I think these same observations are why you won't see any sense of "greatest good of the greatest number" in Epicurus at all. You find emphasis on personal pleasure and the pleasure of your friends (which really derives from the first) but you find little if any reference to the rest of the world in abstract, except to note that some people cannot be made friends and must be treated with distance, or as enemies.