

Thoughts on continuous pleasure, hedonic regimen

Post by "Cassius" of August 30, 2019 at 6:59 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

So it's quite helpful of you to point out his context. DeWitt does that quite a bit, but when reading his book I'm focused more on understanding the philosophy than the context.

Yes Godfrey as I think about it, that may be one of the most important ways that DeWitt's book seems to be different from most other "overview" books.

When I have read the others, they tend to focus exclusively on outlining the major ideas while giving very little attention to the context, and that doesn't work for people who have no idea of the context. To me at least, many of the [Principal Doctrines](#) make no sense whatsoever without seeing the as responses to other philosophical positions. Even as quickly into the list as PD3 and PD4, I believe most "normal" people are going to be bewildered as to why Epicurus wrote in such a seemingly choppy and clipped way.

With probably my primary example being PD3 - "The limit of quantity of pleasure....." I contend that without an understanding of why "limits" and "quantities" were considered relevant to pleasure (which is "explained" in [Philebus](#)) Epicurus' choice to place such a statement near the head of his list "is Greek to us." And the same for PD4, which seems to be a ridiculous assertion if taken literally rather than directed toward the continuity issue. And "[death is nothing to us](#)" seems flippant and contradictory to other provisions of the philosophy unless you realize that he his attacking issues of the alleged afterlife.

While we still largely understand the context of the issues of gods and death, so that PD1 and PD2 continue to be intelligible, much of the rest is directed against specific philosophical problems which are not taught (or at least taught in the same way) anymore, so many people skip over them despite their importance.

DeWitt's approach (pursue in much finer grain detail by Gosling & Taylor, is the only way to pick up the lost meaning.