

How To Convert A Neo-Epicurean Into A Classical Epicurean

Post by "Cassius" of May 2, 2020 at 12:08 PM

In regard to the relationship between logic and reality I have another point: it ought to be clear that to discuss "pleasure is the goal of life" is a logical abstraction itself, and not really something that is "real" - just the same as if we were to say that "virtue" or "being a good person" is "the" goal of life.

The truth is that real people exist only in the present, and our goals are intimately connected with the reality of the present. Our "real" goal at any one moment is very mundane: it is to sleep, or to eat lunch, or to talk to a friend, or take a shower, or squash a bug, or whatever. Yes each of those fall within a framework of pleasure and pain, but that framework is an abstraction created by us for purposes of analysis. Pleasure and pain and bugs and food and showers are all very real, but the idea of abstracting these into a "goal of life" is an aid to our understanding of our place in the universe, an alternative to religion or academic abstractions proposing some other goal, and needs to be seen that way so that we understand the limitations of any discussion of "the goal of life."

It seems to me that it is highly useful to discuss things in these terms so that we can see the error of religion and virtue-based ethics, which are based on "ideals" not grounded in reality. But there is a hazard that we need to keep wary of because by engaging in debate about "the goal of life" we have entered a playing field set up originally by Platonists and other nonEpicureans where it is very easy to accept their premises and forget that we have abstracted out and left out essential aspects of reality.

I am saying this to emphasize that you think this separates Epicurus from the norm and the constant debating about ideals which we should reject in the first place.