

Simulacra, gods and the dead

Post by “timrobbe” of November 14, 2020 at 2:02 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think it's a huge issue as to why, once we find that we can have pleasure even living in a cave on bread and water, we would ever decide to venture out for variations in pleasure. There are many practical reasons, of course, but I do think there is an inner drive to "self-improvement" that is associated or part of this pleasure drive. Variation may not be necessary, but there's no commandment or reason to settle for "simple pleasures" when there are other pleasures that you decide are within your reach at a reasonable cost in pain and that you judge (or feel) would be rewarding for you to have. And of course the aspect of "visualizing goals" seems to be deeply rooted in human psychology.

I am currently writing a Ph.D thesis on the politics, law and sociology of distributing scarce resources (more specifically the distribution of 'limited rights' like grants and subsidies by governmental agencies). That is why this quote by [Cassius](#) resonated with me.

Scarcity as a concept was unknown in traditional communities. People pursued goals and used certain means. Only with the introduction of modern economics did problems with scarcity arise. The goals people can choose to pursue became limited in number. This makes the means scarce by definition. For modern economics, scarcity in means is therefore ontological. John Rawls writes about a dialectic of faculties and desires. He assumes that people always want to improve themselves (more). However, this goal also becomes limitless in the framework of modern society and economics. However, the means, the faculties of (wo)man are limited by nature. Rawls thus legitimizes scarcity and legitimizes the current economic system, including its negative effects. One can get very frustrated, even violent, seeing others improve themselves even more. Aristotle, but especially Epicurus, shows that scarcity is not ontological at all. After all, it is not about scarcity in means, but about limiting your goals. [PD29](#) is indicative of this. In current society and economics and in Rawls' conception of self-improvement there are the dangers of limitless goals. I think Epicurus really wanted to warn us about these concepts. Indeed, be thankful for the faculties and talents given to you by nature and beware of wanting more than you can become and have.