

Episode Ninety-Three: Torquatus Leads Us Forward Into Conflict Over Epicurean Ethics

Post by “Cassius” of October 27, 2021 at 11:18 AM

Yes that is definitely key material!

How do you interpret the "this" in "And because this is the primary and inborn good, we do not choose every pleasure...?"

If we substitute "pleasure" there we get "And because pleasure is the primary and inborn good we do not choose every pleasure...."

Are we not left with the same question as to how to distinguish between which pleasures to choose, and is not "pleasure" as used here a very high-level term encompassing many particulars? I don't see how that conclusion can be avoided unless we take the position that "the feeling of pleasure" is exactly the same in every respect in every experience that we find pleasing. And in case the answer to that question doesn't seem immediately clear, don't pleasures vary *at least* in how long they last? (And I would assert that it is clear that pleasures vary in many other ways as well.)

And in fact even in this passage it's clear that we are sometimes even selecting a temporary pain when a "greater pleasure" comes from having endured that pain.

So aren't we left with the clear conclusion that some pleasures are greater (and some are lesser) than others? And if so, the question to "what is the highest pleasure?" is not answered simply by saying "pleasure"? Is it? 😊

Quote

"And since pleasure is the first good and natural to us, for this very reason we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them: and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time. Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided. Yet by a scale of comparison and by the consideration of advantages and disadvantages we must form our judgment on all these matters. For the good on certain occasions we treat as bad, and conversely the bad as good. And again independence of desire we think a great good — not that we may at all times enjoy but a few things, but that, if we do not possess many, we may enjoy the few in the genuine persuasion that those have the sweetest pleasure in

luxury who least need it, and that all that is natural is easy to be obtained, but that which is superfluous is hard."