

Episode 195 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 05

Post by "Cassius" of October 11, 2023 at 7:06 AM

Time for some Gosling & Taylor. I think this is consistent with most all of what we have said in this thread so far:

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Quote

18.1.4 In other words, the experience of pleasure is experience of its goodness. Indeed for consistency with his theory of knowledge Epicurus must be able to give a perceptual basis for judgments of value if he is to claim that they can be known. This is sometimes construed as though pleasure were a feeling attached to a perception. The word 'pathos' which Epicurus uses to categorize pleasure and pain, means, rather, a way of being affected.

Thus according to Diogenes '(X.34), the Epicureans say that there are two paths that occur with every living thing, pleasure and pain. One might be tempted to think that there are also others, e.g. a Platonic neutral state. But Epicurus allows of no midway between the two: pleasure is defined as the absence of pain. Not, of course, that any absence of pain (e.g. death) is pleasure, but any painless conscious life is a pleasure, where, we must remember, life would not consist simply in being alive, but in living the kind of life characteristic of the species. So with sentient beings there are just two ways in which in their sentient activity they can be affected: painfully or pleasurably, the first being aversive, the second appetitive.

So every perception involves being affected in one or other of these ways and in such perception a sentient being grasps the value or disvalue of being so affected, a grasp that is, at a pre-logical level, constituted by acceptance or aversion. Clearly the whole bias of this way of thinking will be to make the goodness of each particular pleasure obvious in each perception. There will be no temptation to make the value of pleasure maximization over a life obvious to perception.

Nor will any need be felt to appeal to Eudoxan observations as to how human beings argue about the worth of things, what questions they do or do not ask, still less to argue from premisses that suppose that there are other goods than pleasure. If a judgment of worth can be known to be true then it must be possible to refer to some value given in perception to substantiate it, and the only answer can be that it contains pleasures, for anything else can only be judged good in so far as it yields this. If now we are to compare lives it can only be by some comparison of pleasantness, and anyone

who makes a judgment about the worth of a life is making a judgment that can only be substantiated by reference to its pleasantness, which can only be judged in the last resort by the person who lives it. There is room for argument as to what form of life is pleasantest, but no room at all for discussion as to what makes something good.

This sentence, i think, helps with the question of why not sit in the dark staring at a candle: "

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