

Tips On Offsetting Pleasures Against Pains

Post by “Don” of November 28, 2023 at 5:40 PM

As a curiosity, I wanted to see how Yonge translated that section of On Ends:

Quote from Cicero, On Ends: 2.3.9 & 2.4.11

but unless you are very obstinate, you must admit that pleasure is a perfectly distinct thing from mere freedom from pain. You will, however, said [Torquatus], find that I am obstinate in this; for nothing can be more real than the identity between the two. ...

IV. Is it possible, said [Torquatus], for anything to be more delightful than freedom from pain? Well, said [Cicero], but grant that nothing is preferable to that, (for that is not the point which I am inquiring about at present,) does it follow on that account, that pleasure is identical with what I may call painlessness? Undoubtedly it is identical with it, said [Torquatus]; and that painlessness is the greatest of pleasures which no other can possibly exceed.

For the heck of it and easy reference, here's the Latin:

Quote

[3.9] Negat esse eam, inquit, propter se expetendam.

Aliud igitur esse censet gaudere, aliud non dolere.

Et quidem, inquit, vehementer errat; nam, ut paulo ante¹ docui, augendae voluptatis finis est doloris omnis amotio.

Non dolere, inquam, istud quam vim habeat postea videro; aliam vero vim voluptatis esse, aliam nihil dolendi, nisi valde pertinax fueris, concedas necesse est.

Atqui reperies, inquit, in hoc quidem pertinacem; dici enim nihil potest verius.

Estne, quaeso, inquam, sitiendi in bibendo voluptas?

Quis istud possit, inquit, negare?

Eademne, quae restincta siti?

Immo alio genere; restincta enim sitis³ stabilitatem voluptatis habet, inquit,⁴ illa autem voluptas ipsius restinctionis in motu est.

Cur igitur, inquam, res tam dissimiles eodem nomine appellas?

Quid paulo ante, inquit, dixerim nonne meministi, cum omnis dolor detractus esset, variari, non augeri voluptatem? ...

[4.11] Immo sit sane nihil melius, inquam—nondum enim id quaero—, num propterea idem voluptas est, quod, ut ita dicam, indolentia?

Plane idem, inquit, et maxima quidem, qua fieri nulla maior potest.

Quid dubitas igitur, inquam, summo bono a te ita constituto, ut id totum in non dolendo sit, id tenere unum, id tueri, id defendere?

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So, Cicero asks "num propterea idem voluptas est ut ita indolentia?" "Is pleasure (voluptas) the same as "freedom from pain" (indolentia)?" Interestingly enough, indolentia, according to Lewis & Short (*the* Latin dictionary) is a word coined by Cicero! So, Cicero is literally putting words in Torquatus's mouth. And "Torquatus" then agrees that they are the same: Plane idem, inquit, et maxima quidem, qua fieri nulla maior potest. "Plainly the same, says he, and indeed the greatest, than which no greater can be done."

Again, I have to stress that Cicero is making Torquatus say what Cicero wants him to say. Cicero may be a d*ck, but he's a very intelligent, crafty, talented d*ck.

I *think* freedom from pain is usually aponia (ἀπονία) or some form of that or algos (ἄλγος).

ἀπονία is a "not/un-" + ponos

Ponos has a wider meaning than just "pain": stress, trouble, distress, suffering; hard work, toil; pain, esp. physical.

So, to me "aponia" goes beyond a surface reading of "freedom from pain" as I mentioned previously. It's freedom from exertion, toil, suffering, in body and maybe even in mind. That suffering part is important to me. We can experience pain without necessarily layering on suffering.

Algos encompasses "pain (of either mind or body), sorrow, trouble, grief, distress, woe."

So, when we see "freedom from pain" translated from Greek texts, it is an all encompassing idea of freedom from exertion, sorrow, trouble, suffering, distress.

Cicero creates a new word "indolentia" and make it mean "freedom from pain, insensibility" from which we get "indolence" which used to mean "A state in which one feels no pain or is indifferent to it; a lack of any feeling." Then he has his Torquatus agree that pleasure is equated with painless indifference or lack of feeling. By definition, that's NOT an Epicurean equivalence... By definition "freedom of pain" is the feeling of pleasure.

This post has gotten a little long... let me stop here, regroup, read the rest of Cassius's post and Nate's and then ...I'll probably have more to say! 😊