

The Use of Negation in Epicurean Philosophy Concepts

Post by “Cassius” of April 21, 2025 at 5:47 PM

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

On some level I am still having a hard time being able to integrate the idea of only two feelings: pleasure and pain.

And this is why Cicero is so vocal in complaining about Epicurus' references to pleasure. Cicero is capitalizing on the fact that Epicurus is clearly using non-standard terminology, but Cicero isn't explaining that and only allows Torquatus to explain it briefly.

But understanding that this is a conceptual division that makes sense, even though it is non-standard, is the only way to make sense of the passages we find difficult, like the passage from Menoecus we're discussing. This is why we've cited DeWitt's summary of this issue so often. Cicero is right that Epicurus is speaking about pleasure in a manner many people find confusing. But just as with 'gods,' there's a better way to look at both gods and pleasure. The name "god" can be used to describe something(s) that really do exist, but not supernaturally. The name "Pleasure" can also be used to describe something extremely important to human life, but the word as most people use it is being used too narrowly:

Quote from “Epicurus And His Philosophy” page 240 - Norman DeWitt (emphasis added)

Quote

“The extension of the name of pleasure to this normal state of being was the major innovation of the new hedonism. It was in the negative form, freedom from pain of body and distress of mind, that it drew the most persistent and vigorous condemnation from adversaries. The contention was that the application of the name of pleasure to this state was unjustified on the ground that two different things were thereby being denominated by one name. Cicero made a great to-do over this argument, but it is really superficial and captious. The fact that the name of pleasure was not customarily applied to the normal or static state did not alter the fact that the name ought to be applied to it; nor that reason justified the application; nor that human beings would be the happier for so reasoning and believing.”