

Preuss - "Epicurean Ethics - Katastematic Hedonism"

Post by "Cassius" of July 13, 2025 at 7:17 AM

On the same thing we have some excellent material coming up in future weeks on the podcast, including this from Cicero just a little further down than what is quoted above. Here Cicero is referring to Epicurus and quoting him directly to show how Epicurus hammered home the point that pleasure is a term that includes the normal active pleasures. This results in a view that is *wider* than generally understood, not *narrower*:

[Quote from Tusculan Disputations Part 3 Section XVIII](#)

Now, should any one, as the same author says, find his spirits sink with the loss of his fortune, he must apply to those grave philosophers of antiquity for relief, and not to these voluptuaries: for what great abundance of good do they promise? Suppose that we allow that to be without pain is the chief good? yet that is not called pleasure. But it is not necessary at present to go through the whole: the question is, to what point are we to advance in order to abate our grief? Grant that to be in pain is the greatest evil; whosoever, then, has proceeded so far as not to be in pain, is he, therefore, in immediate possession of the greatest good? Why, Epicurus, do we use any evasions, and not allow in our own words the same feeling to be pleasure, which you are used to boast of with such assurance? Are these your words or not? This is what you say in that book which contains all the doctrine of your school; for I will perform, on this occasion, the office of a translator, lest any one should imagine that I am inventing anything. Thus you speak: "Nor can I form any notion of the chief good, abstracted from those pleasures which are perceived by taste, or from what depends on hearing music, or abstracted from ideas raised by external objects visible to the eye, or by agreeable motions, or from those other pleasures which are perceived by the whole man by means of any of his senses; nor can it possibly be said that the pleasures of the mind are excited only by what is good; for I have perceived men's minds to be pleased with the hopes of enjoying those things which I mentioned above, and with the idea that it should enjoy them without any interruption from pain." And these are his exact words, so that any one may understand what were the pleasures with which Epicurus was acquainted. Then he speaks thus, a little lower down: "I have often inquired of those who have been called wise men, what would be the remaining good if they should exclude from consideration all these pleasures, unless they meant to give us nothing but words? I could never learn anything from them; and unless they choose that all virtue and wisdom should vanish and come to nothing, they must say with me, that the only road to happiness lies through those pleasures which I mentioned above." What follows is much the same, and his whole book on the chief good everywhere abounds

with the same opinions.