

Old Tullius Accuses Epicurus of Shirking

Post by "Cassius" of September 7, 2019 at 10:45 AM

Old Tullius was no friend of Epicurus, but in attacking him Cicero preserved important information which allows us to see the true nature of what

Epicurus meant by "pleasure" - and it wasn't just "absence of pain":

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Post by "Cassius" of September 7, 2019 at 10:47 AM

Elayne says:

"One thing hasn't changed... that humans produce cultures where it's "shameful" to pursue pleasure! I have been wondering if that is part of the reason for the persistence of supernatural religions. I see people use imaginary beings as an excuse, which their fellow believers don't argue with. "The holy spirit told me to do it" comes in as handy as "the devil made me do it"--an excuse for a day off from work (sabbaths), for enjoying sex (in Judaism), etc. My grandfather used to tell people his doctor told him he couldn't eat whatever food he didn't like.

Telling the unvarnished truth, that we are making decisions for pleasure, instead of making up an excuse, is a brave action. The more of us who tell the truth to our friends, the more they may feel courage to tell the truth as well, and this silly embarrassment over pleasure could be ended."

Post by "Cassius" of September 7, 2019 at 10:48 AM

Another commentator says: "Pleasure is a joy of the mind. I love that definition."

Cassius replies:

We should remember all the usual cautions as to translations and shades of meaning, but "joy" is a word which clearly describes the presence of an intense form of pleasure. "Joy" is not a word that can be easily squared by those who allege that Epicurus was limiting his ambition to

"absence of pain."

Yes there is a way to square the two terminologies, but not by the modern adoption of stoicized suppression of ordinary views of mental and physical pleasures. Cicero knew that that such an argument would never fly, because he knew well that those who understood Epicurus understood "pleasure" in the normal sense of the word, including taste, music, smooth motion, and the other "**pleasures by any of the senses in the whole man.**"

That last phrase - "**pleasures by any of the senses in the whole man**" is the really explosive definition in this passage that anti-Epicureans don't like.