

Welcome AGB!

Post by "Cassius" of September 3, 2021 at 7:35 AM

AGB your comment reminded me of just one of many examples of the controversies about Epicurus. Here is an example of both Cicero's issues and the general controversies about what Epicurus meant. I think i am so used to these controversies that it is probably a good idea for those of us who are regulars here to step back and think about what new readers of Epicurus are expecting to find. If they are looking for a clear and undisputed body of work that everyone

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,⁵³ 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.

Even at the present day the same objection is raised. For instance, a modern Platonist, ill informed on the true intent of Epicurus, has this to say: "What, in a word, is to be said of a philosophy that begins by regarding pleasure as the only positive good and ends by emptying pleasure of all positive content?"⁵⁴ This ignores the fact that this was but one of the definitions of pleasure offered by Epicurus, that he recognized kinetic as well as static pleasures. It ignores also the fact that Epicurus took personal pleasure in public festivals and encouraged

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surprise! 😊

And for that reason -- that so many of his doctrines are disputed -- I have always remembered and appreciated the very first words of DeWitt's books -- which I think are very important to remember:

THIS book attempts to present for the first time a fairly complete account of the life and teachings of Epicurus. At the very outset the reader should be prepared to think of him at one and the same time as the most revered and the most reviled of all founders of thought in the Graeco-Roman world.