

On Ends Torquatus Section Discussion

Post by "Kalosyni" of May 25, 2023 at 11:24 AM

Highlight 1: Sensation is the method of perception and evaluation of both pleasure and pain. It comes to us out of our natural constitution.

[30] Every creature, as soon as it is born, seeks after pleasure and delights therein as in its supreme good, while it recoils from pain as its supreme evil, and banishes that, so far as it can, from its own presence, and this it does while still uncorrupted, and while nature herself prompts unbiased and unaffected decisions. So he says we need no reasoning or debate to shew why pleasure is matter for desire, pain for aversion. These facts he thinks are simply perceived, just as the fact that fire is hot, snow is white, and honey sweet, no one of which facts are we bound to support by elaborate arguments; it is enough merely to draw attention to the fact; and there is a difference between proof and formal argument on the one hand and a slight hint and direction of the attention on the other; the one process reveals to us mysteries and things under a veil, so to speak; the other enables us to pronounce upon patent and evident facts. Moreover, seeing that if you deprive a man of his senses there is nothing left to him, it is inevitable that nature herself should be the arbiter of what is in accord with or opposed to nature. Now what facts does she grasp or with what facts is her decision to seek or avoid any particular thing concerned, unless the facts of pleasure and pain?

I am coming at this from a different focus than Cicero, and I want to highlight those sections which shed light onto the Epicurean worldview. I may come back later to the discussion on "the good", which we find in the text's previous paragraph. (In section 29 it says: The problem before us then is, what is the climax and standard of things good, and this in the opinion of all philosophers must needs be such that we are bound to test all things by it, but the standard itself by nothing. Epicurus places this standard in pleasure, which he lays down to be the supreme good, while pain is the supreme evil; and he founds his proof of this on the following considerations). As this line of thinking is coming from a different philosophical school (Platonic), and which the Epicureans had to deal with this line of questioning from the opposing philosophy. It is a very different focus than the recognition of the mortality of life and the desire to live in such a way as to enjoy the experience of this life we find ourselves in.

This highlighted paragraph (section 30) sheds light on both the sensations and the feelings -- and which together with anticipations (prolepsis - the faculty of pattern recognition) are the three legs of the canon of truth. The sensations are the primary method in which we gather information about the outside (material) world. And we see that the feelings are two: pleasure and pain.

It worth contemplating both the sensations and the feelings. How do we sense things? How to we come to label things? Regarding sensations and feelings can we notice that they fall into only two catagories -- "okay" and "not okay"? And there could be further contemplations (more on this soon).