

Episode 176 - "Epicurus And His Philosophy" Part 28 - Chapter 12 - The New Hedonism 05

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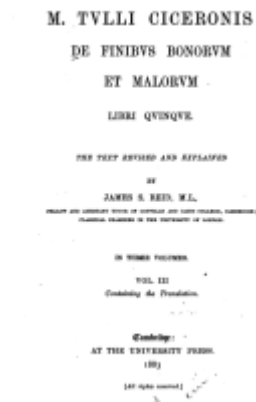
In our discussions we spend most of our time talking about Torquatus' positive presentation of Epicurean ethics in Book One of "On Ends," but there is a lot of material also in Book Two.

In this episode of the podcast DeWitt reminds us of the criticism that Cicero raised that we should not be calling a state of absence of pain as a positive pleasure. Cicero knew that it is important to Epicurean theory that we be able to do just that, so to be sure we are on top of this issue here is some of the important material, this from the Reid translation of On Ends.

I have highlighted at the end of this passage Cicero's attempt to ridicule the idea that the host who pours a libation for a thirsty guest can be thought of as experiencing just as much pleasure as the guest who drinks it.

Cicero seeks to make that look ridiculous, but this is true if we think logically of all types of pleasure as pleasure (this is the "Unity of Pleasure" that DeWitt is talking about). In this example each person is experiencing the positive pleasure of being alive without pain, and even if they are experiencing different types of pleasure at the particular moment, if they are experiencing no pain then they are experiencing the height of pleasure open to them (as pleasure is filling their experience so they are in no pain.)

(Note - the following quotes are from Reid)



15 V. Do you think then that I sufficiently grasp the force of expressions, or am I even at my age to be taught to speak either Greek or Latin? And, putting that aside, even granting that I do not clearly comprehend what Epicurus means, though I have, I believe, a clear knowledge of Greek, look to it that there be not some fault in him who uses such language that he is not understood. This happens in two ways without reproof, when it is done intentionally, as by Heraclitus, *who is styled by the surname σκοτεινός, because he talked about physical science in very dark language*, or when the darkness of the subject-matter, not the language, makes the style difficult to understand, as is the case with the *Timæus* of Plato. But Epicurus, I imagine, neither lacks the desire to express himself lucidly and plainly, if he can, nor deals with dark subjects, as do the physical writers, nor with technical matters, like the mathematicians, but speaks on a doctrine which is perspicuous and easy and which has already spread itself abroad. Still you do not declare that we fail to understand what pleasure is, but what he says of it, whence it results not that we fail to under-

16 a fashion of his own and gives no heed to ours. If indeed his statement is identical with that of Hieronymus, who pronounces that supreme good consists in a life apart from all annoyance, why does he prefer to talk of pleasure rather than of freedom from pain, as Hieronymus does, who well understands what he is describing? And if he thinks he must add to this the pleasure which depends on agitation (for he thus speaks of this sweet kind of pleasure, as consisting in agitation, and of the other, felt by a man free from pain, as consisting in steadiness) why does he fight? He cannot bring it about that any man who knows himself, I mean who has thoroughly examined his own constitution and his own senses, should think that freedom from pain is one and the same thing with pleasure. It is as good as doing violence to the senses, Torquatus, to uproot from our minds those notions of words which are ingrained in us. Why, who can fail to see that there are, in the nature of things, these three states, one when we are in pleasure, another when we are in pain, the third, the state in which I am now, and I suppose you

too, when we are neither in pain nor in pleasure; thus he who is feasting is in pleasure, while he who is on the rack is in pain. But do you not see that between these extremes lies a great crowd of men who feel neither delight nor sorrow?' 'Not at all,' said he; 'and I affirm that all who are without pain are in pleasure and that the fullest possible.' 'Therefore he who, not thirsty himself, mixes mead for another, and he who, being thirsty, drinks the mead, are in just the same state of pleasure?'

VI. Then he replied: 'Make an end of questioning if you please; and I said at the outset that I preferred to have it so, foreseeing just what has come about, I mean logical quibbles.' 'Then,' said I, 'would you rather that we debated in rhetorical than in logical style?' 'You speak,' he answered, 'as though continuous speech belonged to rhetoricians only and not to philosophers also.' 'This,' I replied, 'is what Zeno the Stoic says; that all power of speech has two divisions (so it seemed to Aristotle before him); rhetoric he declared to resemble the open hand, logic the closed fist, because rhetoricians speak in a

DeWitt sees this "unity of pleasure" perspective as the intent of the point to be taken from [PD09](#):

[PD09](#). If every pleasure could be intensified so that it lasted, and influenced the whole organism or the most essential parts of our nature, pleasures would never differ from one another.

And I think he is probably correct.