

Episode 194 - The Epicurean Arguments In Cicero's On Ends - Book One - Part 04

Post by “Cassius” of October 2, 2023 at 12:09 PM

There are a lot of issues we need to explore from this podcast including:

1. I think we can take a common sense interpretation of Cicero's complaint that Epicurus lacks "definition" of pleasure, but there are probably some specifics we can clean from the more formal explanation of "definition" that we can use to understand what Epicurus was objecting to.
 1. Here is part of that objection from book one: "VII. And as for the second part of philosophy, which belongs to investigating and discussing, and which is called λογική, there your master as it seems to me is wholly unarmed and defenceless. He abolishes definitions; he lays down no rules for division and partition; he gives no method for drawing conclusions or establishing principles; he does not point out how captious objections may be refuted, or ambiguous terms explained. He places all our judgments of things in our senses; and if they are once led to approve of anything false as if it were true, then he thinks that there is an end to all our power of distinguishing between truth and falsehood.
2. We also need to hammer home specifically that when Torquatus is saying that a man who is conscious of anything is experiencing either pleasure or pain does not mean that there is some abstract new status of "pleasure" or "pain" that somehow in some mysterious way constitutes a new higher category, but that he is referring (as he says) to a predominance of pleasures over pains, meaning that we are experiencing many combinations of pleasure and pain at once. Pleasure and pain do not mix, and in any part of our experience we only experience one at a time, but they do coexist in different parts of our experience (or he would not have said that the wise man can experience continuous pleasure by offsetting pleasures against pains).

If anyone is aware of good articles or sources on these (particularly "definition") please post them.