

Episode 195 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 05

Post by "Joshua" of October 8, 2023 at 11:58 AM

In coming to terms with Cicero's loathing for pleasure, I thought of another reason beyond the ones that we have already discussed. We could probably make a list;

- Pleasure directly challenges the Virtues for pride of place among human pursuits. The Virtues are orderly feminine personifications, reinforcing social structure, political security, justice in human affairs, and the goodness in the Roman state religion--Pleasure is the "harlot" as Cicero says, the thief in the night, the enemy at the gates, and the frenzied chaotic Bacchanalia set against the quite life of sedate *Otium*, the useful, healthful, restorative leisure of the learned Roman aristocrat.
- The pursuit of pleasure signifies weakness, swinishness, and moral decay. Those who pursue it are intellectual eunuchs.

Another reason that occurred to me;

- The pleasure-pain diad, which, its adherents claim, is sufficient to contain all human *pathos*, is offensively reductionist. For Cicero, who sees himself as a dedicated statesman, a skilled rhetorician, a model prose stylist, an adept philosopher, a careful biographer, and a virtuous friend, the reduction of human experience to mere pleasure and pain represents a direct challenge to his own view of himself--he is a polymath; a many-sided man, the prototypical Renaissance man, whose motives are complex. *And will you claim that I, Cicero, am driven by desires and impulses no better than those of an animal!?*