

Episode 196 - The Epicurean Arguments In Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 06

Post by "Cassius" of October 13, 2023 at 12:52 PM

Ok - In listening again to Episode 195, I think we had a great conversation. However I think there is a lot more to say, so as we start 196 i expect to take us back over some of the same points, especially:

When we consider the Letter to Menoecus TOGETHER with PDO3, I would say that we have to be firm both on both the overall organism level and as to individual feelings. We're not talking ONLY about the limit of quantity of pleasure being the absence of pain, but we are talking about any individual desirable feeling as being called by either of the names "pleasure" OR "absence of pain" - in other words that the terms are interchangeable.

This latter point is more clear from the letter to Menoecus: "By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul.". This is not directed toward the limit of the quantity of pleasure, as in the first sentence of [PD03](#), but to what is said in the second sentence.

Torquatus is hammering this point over and over, but we can't leave it ambiguous:

1 - The theoretical goal is 100% pleasure / 0% pain, because it's obvious nothing can be more complete than 100%. When looking at your whole life "in sum," the logical goal for your life as a whole is 100% pleasure / 0% pain. Of course we know it is canonical Epicurus that we sometimes choose pain when that leads to more pleasure or less overall pain, so the 100% / 0% goal is a "whole organism" perspective, and not an inflexible rule that says at every moment that your "prime directive" is to make sure you never experience a moment of pain. You look to all the consequences and you act accordingly.

AND -

2 - Every step along the way, in any discrete moment / part / feeling / experience of your life, what you are feeling / experiencing is registered as either pleasure or pain, and that there is no "neutral" or third or fourth or any other kind of experience that does not fall under pleasure or pain. If you are not feeling pain, what you are feeling is pleasure, full stop, end of need to look for any other high-level label. Any feeling that we find to be desirable is equally describing as "pleasure" or "absence of pain" at this high level of analysis.

We then to hammer home that analysis and then go back over why the example of Hieronymus of Rhodes illustates this equivalence through the different positions that the two philosophers are taking.

If anyone has suggestions on ways to illustrate these points we will be glad to incorporate them into the upcoming podcast.