

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

Post by "Cassius" of October 15, 2023 at 12:59 PM

I can't really fault Cicero's reading of the "normal" view of pleasure. He's focusing on words like "delight" but especially "agitation," which isn't being used in the "negative" sense of "agitation" but more in the "my washing machine has an agitator that washes the clothes." It's not really "length of time" that describes the agitation but something else, and I don't think "motion" really captures the issue either. Almost like we are talking about "excited" atomic particles.

On Ends Book Two:

Cicero: To let you know that I do understand, I first declare that by voluptas I mean what he means by [hedone](#). Now though we often search for a Latin word equivalent to a Greek word and conveying the same sense, in this case there was no need to search. No word can possibly be discovered which more exactly represents in Latin the sense of a Greek word than voluptas. All men everywhere who know Latin denote by this word two things, delight existing in the mind and a sweet agreeable agitation in the body. In fact the character in Trabea's play describes delight as excessive pleasure in the mind, just like the character in Caecilius, who gives out that he is delighted with all delights. But there is this distinction, that voluptas is applied also to the mind (an immoral feeling, as the Stoics think, who deign it as an irrational elevation of the mind when it fancies itself in the enjoyment of some great blessing) while laetitia and gaudium are not used in connexion with the body. But according to the usage of all who speak Latin, pleasure consists in feeling that kind of agreeableness which agitates some one of the senses. This agreeableness too you may apply metaphorically if you please to the mind; for we use the phrase to affect agreeably in both cases, and in connexion with it the word agreeable; if only you understand that midway between the man who says I am enriched with such delight that I am unsteadied and the man who cries now at last is my heart on fire, one of whom is transported with delight, while the other is racked by pain, comes this man's speech though this our acquaintance is quite recent, for he is neither in a state of delight nor of torture; and also that between him who is master of exquisite bodily pleasures and him who is tormented by the intensest pains comes he who is removed from both states.