

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

Post by "Cassius" of October 16, 2023 at 9:12 AM

As we discuss words like "normal" or "regular" to describe the pleasure of daily life even in the absence of stimulation, I think we should remember DeWitt's focus on "health" as a description of the normal regular non-painful condition (page numbers refer to DeWitts "Epicurus and his philosophy")

VS54. We must not pretend to study philosophy, but study it in reality, for it is not the appearance of health that we need, but real health.

I am not sure where this comes from in Horace, but on p 29 of the book: "For this ambitious program of expansion the school was prepared as any Greek school had ever been or ever would be. Not only was every convert obligated to become a missionary; he was also a colporteur who had available a pamphlet for every need. "Are you bloated with love of praise? There are infallible rites," wrote Horace, "which can restore your health if only you will read a pamphlet three times with open mind."

Also page 66: "Neither was he in debt to his teachers for his hedonism. None of them was a hedonist. He was in debt to Plato for suggestions concerning the classification of desires and the calculus of advantage in pleasure, but differed from both Plato and Aristippus in his definition of pleasure. To neither of these was continuous pleasure conceivable, because they recognized only peaks of pleasure separated either by intervals void of pleasure or by neutral states. In order to escape from these logical dead ends Epicurus worked his way to a novel division of pleasures into those that were basic and those that were decorative. The pleasure of being sane and in health is basic and can be enjoyed continually. All other pleasures are superfluous and decorative. For this doctrine, once more, he was in debt to no teacher.

- Letter to Menoecus: 122] "Let no one when young delay to study philosophy, nor when he is old grow weary of his study. For no one can come too early or too late to secure the health of his soul."

- page 148 in regard to time - "The line of reasoning may be sketched as follows: a human being is susceptible of sickness but sickness is not a permanent attribute. only a temporary condition, that is, an accident. Sickness in its turn may be long or short. but this quality of length or brevity is not a permanent attribute but an accident. Therefore it is an accident of an accident. Next. by analogy, since we associate time with states of health or sickness. the time of their duration is said to be long or short. Thus long and short become predicates of time while in reality they apply only to states of health or sickness. This amounts to saying that in the phrases "a long time" or "a short time" the adjectives are transferred epithets.

page 217 - He also had something new to say on the true relation of pleasure to pain. Some had believed them true opposites on the ground of universal pursuit and universal avoidance. Others had firmly denied this on the ground that some pleasures were good and some bad, while some denied that any pleasures were good. Neither were either laymen or philosophers agreed upon the nature of pain; Antisthenes and the Spartans classified it as good. Epicurus discovered a logical position for himself by positing an indissoluble connection between pleasure and health and between pain and disease. No one could then with

reason deny that pleasure was a true opposite to pain since it would mean denying that health was a true opposite to disease. Neither could men deny that health was a good and disease an evil. By the same token pleasure was bound to be a good and pain an evil.

page 223 - It follows from this that pleasure is not to be opposed to pain on the ground alone that all creatures pursue the one and avoid the other: the two are true opposites because they stand in the same relation as health which preserves and disease which destroys. It is for this reason that the one is good and the other is evil, Vatican Saying 37: "Human nature is vulnerable to evil, not to the good. because it is preserved by pleasures, destroyed by pains." This may be taken to mean that pleasure, as it were, is nutriment to the human being, as food is, and that human nature reaches out for it just as each living thing by some natural impulse seeks its appropriate food. It is no accident that the following statement of Aristotle is to be found in his discussion of pleasure: "And it may well be that in the lower animals there is some natural good, superior to their scale of existence, which reaches out for the kindred good." With this surmise Epicurus would have concurred: all creatures

seek pleasure as if food; they avoid pain as if poison.