

Episode 206 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 14 - More On The Nature of Morality

Post by “Cassius” of December 15, 2023 at 9:19 AM

Last week we ended before fully addressing this passage below. It's wording is a bit complicated, so might be worth comment here in the thread. Cicero appears to be saying that it is not the fact that the crowd may think a thing moral that makes it moral, but the intrinsic beauty of the thing that would make it moral regardless of whether the crowd recognized it or not. Seems like this might be a variation of the Euthyro dilemma that Joshua mentioned in the last episode-- with this variation saying it's not the crowd (rather than god) that judges morality to be beautiful, but that morality is a beautiful thing in itself regardless of whether the crowd recognizes it (?)

Quote from Cicero

A famous philosopher, by whom not only Greece and Italy, but even all foreign nations have been thrown into excitement, declares that he does not understand what morality means, if it does not lie in pleasure, unless perhaps it be some qualities extolled by the babble of the crowd. But I hold such qualities to be often actually immoral, and if at any time they be not immoral, they are then not immoral when the crowd extols what is essentially in its own nature right and deserves to be extolled; yet it is not called moral for the reason that it is applauded by many men, but because it is of such a nature that even if men knew nothing about it, or had even been struck with dumbness, it would deserve to be extolled for its inherent loveliness and beauty.