

Are the Gods Totally Painless? Does Calling Us To "Continuous Pleasure" Mean Totally Painless?

Post by "Cassius" of April 3, 2019 at 6:29 AM

Elayne, I completely agree with your view stated this and similar ways: "For me it is more like I have pleasures _in spite of_ unavoidable pains of the past or present, not _because of_ these pains. "

The part where I am not sure is that saying that we only have pleasure because of the existence of pain (and therefore we need pain) might not be the only way to read what Wright is saying. (Although I agree that it seems she is saying that)

Where I am thinking there may be validity is to ask a similar question:

Does matter exist because there is void? Does void exist because there is matter? It may be that Wright senses that Epicurus was saying that reality is the way it is because of Nature and that we should be grateful to Nature that reality is the way it is (various sayings I think would support that including the one to the effect of being grateful that what is good is easy to get and what is bad is not -- I need the exact translation here.

So it might be possible that Wright is extrapolating from that.

Here it is:

GRATITUDE TO NATURE

The duty of gratitude to Nature is on record in these words: "Gratitude is due to blessed Nature because she has made life's necessities easy of acquisition and those things that are difficult of acquisition unnecessary."¹¹⁷ The true basis of the debt to Nature, however, is to be found in her function as a teacher. She is not to Epicurus, as she was to Aristotle, merely the creative force in the universe. She was also the aggregate of animate experience and especially of human experience.

It is Nature that reveals the Canon of truth and bestows upon man the means of contact between his soul and the material world, Sensations, Anticipations, Feelings. The true end of living as she reveals it is "the end of Nature." True justice is "the justice of Nature." The true attitude toward the desires consists in recognizing "the limits of Nature." The true attitude toward riches and poverty demands knowledge of "the wealth of Nature." She is the ethical teacher: "Nature teaches us to think the gifts of Fortune as of minor value and to know that when we are fortunate we are unfortunate."¹¹⁸ In the language of Lucretius she is so eager for men to know the truth that she "barks" it aloud,¹¹⁹ like a faithful dog that is keen to give warning. In a magnificent passage toward the end of the third book the poet steps aside and yields the pulpit to her so that in her own person she may lash self-pitying old men for their ingratitude.¹²⁰ If we take Nature in this Epicurean sense as a benevolent teacher, then gratitude is an imperative of Nature. It is owed to her by man and she in turn enjoins it upon man.