

Episode 211 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 18 - Battle Of The Images

Post by "Cassius" of January 28, 2024 at 6:33 AM

I thought I had seen a Renaissance or Medieval interpretation of Cleanthes' imaginary painting somewhere, but so far I cannot find one. I wonder if someone reading this who is good with using the new AI drawing mechanisms would be interested in seeing what they could do to create one. I am sure that there are many variations which could be used to make useful representations, but I am specifically thinking of at least two - one to illustrate Cleanthes' version for discussion purposes, and one to illustrate an Epicurean alternative of the same scene.

One - A version to illustrate exactly what Cicero describes: "that picture which Cleanthes was in the habit of drawing with such accuracy in his description. He used to desire those who came to him as his pupils, to think of Pleasure painted in a picture, clad in beautiful robes, with royal ornaments, and sitting on a throne. He represented all the Virtues [edit: presumably Wisdom, Temperance, Courage, Justice - perhaps Friendship also) around her, as her handmaidens, doing nothing else, and thinking nothing else their duty, but to minister to Pleasure, and only just to whisper in her ear (if, indeed, that could be made intelligible in a picture) a warning to be on her guard to do nothing imprudent, nothing to offend the minds of men, nothing from which any pain could ensue. We, indeed, they would say, we Virtues are only born to act as your slaves; we have no other business."

Two - I suspect version one as described by Cleanthes would have followed Cicero's insistence on seeing Pleasure as "sex, drugs, and rock'n'roll by portraying Pleasure, though clad beautifully, with sort of a "harsh" face to emphasize that "sensuous" side of Pleasure. But if an Epicurean were conveying the scene in its true aspect, the view of Pleasure on the throne would have her portrayed fully in a more "noble" look to convey *all* the aspects of Epicurean pleasure, not only the beauty of sensuousness but also the elegance and strength and beauty that comes from embodying wisdom and temperance and courage and justice in a way properly understood as consistent with and a part of pleasure.

So for Two we would need a different version to contrast with that of Cleanthes. We would need (if something like this works as an AI instruction: "A picture of a young and beautiful and strong queen, [in classic Greco-Roman style analogous perhaps to Arwen in Lord of the Rings], smiling and are surrounded by cherubic angels who look to be her happy subjects labeled wisdom, temperance, courage, justice, and friendship, all conveying a look of harmonious happiness and benevolence.

I haven't studied enough of the AI world to know how to do this yet but perhaps others could take a shot at it?