

Episode 216 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 23 - Why Does Epicurus Say Length Of Time Does Not Contribute To Pleasure?

Post by "Cassius" of February 29, 2024 at 7:54 AM

Thank you Don for the extra Seneca because that ("*You will find nothing straighter than the straight, nothing truer than the truth, and nothing more temperate than that which is temperate*") does make the point more clear.

I think we are on the same track but for *perhaps* the final sentence:

[Quote from Don](#)

Epicurus answers that by saying pleasure cannot rise to greater heights than the absence of all pain, therefore, pleasure cannot be added to once it has replaced all pain.

If pleasure IS absence of pain, as Torquatus insists to Cicero multiple times, then the same analysis applies to pleasure as to virtue. There is no "rising" or "moving" involved in the analysis at the level we are talking about. "*You will find nothing straighter than the straight, nothing truer than the truth, and nothing more temperate than that which is temperate.*" It's easy to extend that to "*You will find nothing more pleasurable than pleasure.*"

The important point would be NOT that it is essential to remove all pain in life before we can experience pleasure. Only "the gods" can do that, and that is the lever that Cicero is using to argue that Epicurus makes no sense. Cicero is saying that Epicurus himself does not even experience pleasure because what he in fact experiences is a mixture of pleasure and pain, which is not pleasure.

The important point would be that WHEREVER pleasure exists, pain is absent, which means that anytime we experience pleasure we are in fact experiencing pleasure in the full and complete sense of the term. Nothing is more pleasurable than pleasure.

If this were not so, then we would never be able to experience pleasure at all, because what we would be experiencing would be some incomplete pleasure, some mixture of pleasure and pain, which from this perspective is not pleasure at all. A "mixture" is not the same thing as a "thing in its pure form."

So this "pleasure is the absence of pain" is necessary to comprehend that it is possible to experience pleasure at all.

This would be the "mental" part of the perspective, the part that the mind has to do in order for the person to understand that what his body feels when it feels pleasure is not lacking something, but which is in fact complete.

And since I think it is fair to say that Seneca is even more derivative as a philosopher than is Cicero, we are going to find this same point argued in other forms in other philosophers of the Platonic-Stoic line. But at the moment, this particular passage from Seneca stands out for its clarity.