

Episode 237 - Cicero's OTNOTG - 12 - Isonomia And The Implications of Infinity

Post by “Cassius” of July 11, 2024 at 10:35 AM

[Quote from TauPhi](#)

Now, if I could convince you to drop 'theology' in favour of something like 'cerebration of nature' j

Yes for those who were not there, "the definition question" was the issue that several of us discussed on Zoom last night. Tau Phi and several others are firmly in what I will call the - "What the heck was Epicurus doing messing with the definitions of words?!?#!&^???" camp.



That's where Cicero was too, so they are in very respectable company!

However *challenging and changing the definitions we give to words* seems to be a central element of the whole Epicurean project. That means there will need to be smoother and more persuasive ways to convince people that that is a valid approach. I think Bryan and Joshua at the very least have some good ideas on that, because the list of words that Epicurus was using in unique ways seems to be very long. Even if we start only with the list Cicero himself gives, the list goes all the way from *pleasure* to *prolepsis*, and that just gets us started with the "p's," without even mentioning the "g-words!"

Right now I am still inclined to go with DeWitt's reasoning:

Quote from “Epicurus And His Philosophy” page 240 - Norman DeWitt (emphasis added)

“The extension of the name of pleasure to this normal state of being was the major innovation of the new hedonism. It was in the negative form, freedom from pain of body and distress of mind, that it drew the most persistent and vigorous condemnation from adversaries. The contention was that the application of the name of pleasure to this state was unjustified on the ground that two different things were thereby being denominated by one name. Cicero made a great to-do over this argument, but it is really superficial and captious. The fact that the name of pleasure was not customarily applied to the normal or static state did not alter the fact that the name ought to be applied to it; nor that reason justified the application; nor that human beings would be the happier for so reasoning and believing.”

So to interpolate that last sentence to our current context:

The fact that the name of "gods" has not been customarily applied to beings who live only in pleasure and without any pain, and who can continue to live for an unlimited lifespan, does not alter the fact that the name ought to be applied to them; nor that reason justifies the application; nor that human beings would be the happier for so reasoning and believing.