

Episode 267 - Virtue Is Not Absolute Or An End In Itself - All Good And Evil Consists In Sensation.

Post by "Cassius" of February 3, 2025 at 2:19 PM

Don -- I guess we don't have the Greek to compare to this, but whatever the ambiguity of the word virtue is, it looks like the dispute crystallized, maybe after Epicurus himself was dead, into what Diogenes of Oinoanda is discussing at [Fragment 32](#). I note that the word is used in the plural in this translation. I am thinking that this aspect (which is the means and which is the end) is what people most want us to discuss. Also, I've never been entirely sure whether these European quote marks << >> are supposed to indicate quotes within the text, or missing data which Martin Ferguson Smith has reconstructed. In this case I don't gather that its reconstructed, but rather intended to set off certain sections of text as being referenced rather than being the words of Diogenes himself, but I'm just not sure.

Quote

Fr. 32

... [the latter] being as malicious as the former.

I shall discuss folly shortly, the virtues and pleasure now.

If, gentlemen, the point at issue between these people and us involved inquiry into «what is the means of happiness?» and they wanted to say «the virtues» (which would actually be true), it would be unnecessary to take any other step than to agree with them about this, without more ado. But since, as I say, the issue is not «what is the means of happiness?» but «what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?», I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues, which are inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end.

Let us therefore now state that this is true, making it our starting-point.

Suppose, then, someone were to ask someone, though it is a naive question, «who is it whom these virtues benefit?», obviously the answer will be «man.» The virtues certainly do not make provision for these birds flying past, enabling them to fly well, or for each of the other animals: they do not desert the nature with which they live and by which they have been engendered; rather it is for the sake of this nature that the virtues do everything and exist.

Each (virtue?) therefore means of (?) ... just as if a mother for whatever reasons sees that the possessing nature has been summoned there, it then being

necessary to allow the court to asked what each (virtue?) is doing and for whom [We must show] both which of the desires are natural and which are not; and in general all things that [are included] in the [former category are easily attained]