

Episode 269 - By Pleasure We Mean The Absence of Pain (All Experience That Is Not Painful)

Post by "Joshua" of February 23, 2025 at 11:40 AM

Quote

As to pleasure the philosophers of old expressed varying opinions. Epicurus makes pleasure the highest good, but defines it as σαρκὸς εὐσταθὲς κατάσταση, or "a well-balanced condition of body." Antisthenes the Socratic calls it the greatest evil; for this is the expression he uses: μανείην μᾶλλον ἢ ἡσθείην; that is to say, "may I go mad rather than feel pleasure." Speusippus and all the old Academy declare that pleasure and pain are two evils opposed to each other, but that what lay midway between the two was the good. Zeno thought that pleasure was indifferent, that is neutral, neither good nor evil, that, p171 namely, which he called by the Greek term ἀδιάφορον. Critolaus the Peripatetic declares that pleasure is an evil and gives birth to many other evils: injustice, sloth, forgetfulness, and cowardice. Earlier than all these Plato discoursed in so many and varied ways about pleasure, that all those opinions which I have set forth may seem to have flowed from the founts of his discourses; for he makes use of each one of them according to the suggestion offered by the nature of pleasure itself, which is manifold, and according to the demands made by the character of the topics which he is treating and of the effect that he wishes to produce. But our countryman Taurus, whenever mention was made of Epicurus, always had on his lips and tongue these words of Hierocles the Stoic, a man of righteousness and dignity: "Pleasure an end, a harlot's creed; there is no Providence, not even a harlot's creed."

-Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* Book IX