

Serenity Has Symptoms Too

Lucretian Physiology of Pleasure

1. Iliad 19.15-18

“ἀλλ’ ἔτρεσαν. αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς ὡς εἶδ’, ὥς μιν μάλλον ἔδου χόλος, ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε δεινὸν ὑπὸ βλεφάρων ὡς εἰ σέλας ἐξεφάνθεν.”

But when Achilles saw the arms, then wrath came on him still more, and his eyes showed forth terribly from beneath their lids, like flame;

2. DRN 3.288-9

“*est etiam calor ille animo, quem sumit, in ira cum fervescit et ex oculis micat acrius ardor*”

The mind also has heat in anger, which it takes up, when it grows hot and harsh flame flashes from the eyes.

3. Epicurus Fragment 1

“ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀταραξία καὶ <ή> ἀπονία καταστηματαί καὶ εἰσιν ἡδοναί. ἡ δὲ χαρὰ καὶ ἡ εὐφροσύνη κατὰ κίνησιν ἐνεργεῖα βλέπονται.”

Lack of mental disturbance and lack of bodily pain are static pleasures, whereas revelry and rejoicing are active pleasures involving movement.

4. Epicurus Letter to Menoecus 128

“τούτων γὰρ ἀπλανῆς θεωρία πᾶσαν αἴρεσιν καὶ φυγὴν ἐπανάγειν οἶδεν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὑγίαιαν καὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀταραξίαν, ἐπεὶ τοῦτο τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν ἐστὶ τέλος. τούτου γὰρ πάντα πράττομεν, ὅπως μῆτε ἀλγῶμεν μῆτε ταρβῶμεν. ὅταν δὲ ἅπαξ τοῦτο περὶ ἡμᾶς γένηται, λύεται πᾶς ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς χειμῶν, οὐκ ἔχοντος τοῦ ζώου βαδίζειν ὡς πρὸς ἐνδέον τι καὶ ζητεῖν ἕτερον ἢ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος ἀγαθὸν συμπληρώσεται. τότε γὰρ ἡδονῆς χρεῖαν ἔχομεν, ὅταν ἐκ τοῦ μὴ παρεῖναι τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀλγῶμεν· <ὅταν δὲ μὴ ἀλγῶμεν> οὐκέτι τῆς ἡδονῆς δεόμεθα. καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τέλος λέγομεν εἶναι τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν.”

The steady contemplation of these facts enables you to understand everything that you accept or reject in terms of **the health of the body** and the **serenity of the soul** — **since that is the goal of a completely happy life. Our every action is done so that we will not be in pain or fear.** As soon as we achieve this, the soul is released from **every storm**, since an animal has no other need and must seek nothing else to complete the goodness of body and soul. **Thus we need pleasure only when we are in pain caused by its absence;** but when we are not in pain then we have no need of pleasure.

5. DRN 4.622-5

*“hoc ubi levia sunt manantis corpora suci, suaviter attingunt.. at contra pungunt sensum
lacerant coorta quanto quaeque magis sunt asperitate repleta.”*

“When atoms of the flowing juice are light, they touch sweetly... but they prick the sense and lash it when they rise, to the degree with which they are more full of roughness.”

6. DRN 3.290-3

“est et frigida multa comes formidinis aura, quae ciet horrorem membris et concitat artus;
est etiam quoque **pacati status aeris ille, pectore tranquillo** qui fit **voltuque sereno**”

There is also much cold air, a companion of fear, which causes bristling in the body and excites the limbs; there is also that standing posture of peaceful air which happens in a calm heart and tranquil face.

7. DRN 3.9-12

*“suppeditas praecepta, tuisque ex, inclute, chartis,
floriferis ut apes in saltibus omnia libant,
omnia nos itidem depascimur aurea dicta”*

“You supply precepts, oh famous one, from your pages, and as bees drink everything in flowery glades, so we feed on all your golden words.”

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