



Teaching Boethius with Josh Gibbs

Lesson 4: Three Different Ways of Pursuing Happiness

Outline:

The role of the imagination in the life of a man who is suffering misfortune.

- Wealth, position, power, fame, and pleasure are said to be the things that make a man happy; Epicurus said pleasure is the highest good because it does not bring enjoyment to the mind.
 - Lady Philosophy addresses each value, reasoning that none, alone, makes a man happy.
 - Discussion of the folly of thinking that happiness is something conferred to us via material acquisitions.
 - Take these chapters slowly, questioningly. According to Lady Philosophy:
 - Wealth makes one a slave.
 - Position does not make a man good.
 - Power corrupts virtue.
 - Fame is fleeting and fickle (see *An Artist of the Floating World* by Kazuo Ishiguro).
- Physical pleasure leaves one empty in absence of it.
 - “The end of pleasure is sorrow.” - Lady Philosophy
 - Expansion of tastes leaves one suddenly dissatisfied with that which, before, satisfied him.
 - “Once you have had the best, it is hard to go back” (Mr. Gibbs shares examples to illustrate this idea).
 - “The greater your capacity for pleasure expands, the more pleasure is required for life to be normal.”
- According to Lady Philosophy/Boethius, “The happiest people are people who are satisfied by the least.”
 - Denying the soul its natural government of the body may bring pleasure for a time, but ultimately leads to dissatisfaction and numbness to what is natural in the world.

The imagination helps us recognize our limitations and find contentment in the natural things of the world.