

Episode 270 - Life Is Desirable, But Unlimited Time Contains No Greater Pleasure Than Limited Time

Post by "Cassius" of February 22, 2025 at 3:34 PM

Joshua the passage that Cicero states right after the part that we are quoting bolsters the argument that this entire discussion is related to the [Philebus](#) argument.

Cicero is essentially arguing exactly what Plato argued: that virtue can be the good because it has a limit (it can be "consummated") while pleasure cannot be the good *because it has no limit; it can always be made better (by adding more)*.

He who places good entirely in virtue can say that happiness is consummated by the consummation of virtue, since he denies that time brings additions to his supreme good; but when a man supposes that happiness is caused by pleasure, how are his doctrines to be reconciled, if he means to affirm that pleasure is not heightened by duration? In that case, neither is pain. Or, though all the most enduring pains are also the most wretched, does length of time not render pleasure more enviable? What reason then has Epicurus for calling a god, as he does, both happy and eternal? If you take away his eternity, Jupiter will be not a whit happier than Epicurus, since both of them are in the enjoyment of the supreme good, which is pleasure.

Epicurus is responding to Plato by saying that pleasure does have a limit, and that limit is reached when your experience is "full" of pleasures with no mixture of pains.

Epicurus' argument is not any more guilty of gamesmanship with words than is the Stoic argument that the virtuous man is purely virtuous. The Stoics still have to point to individual people and individual cases of people pursuing virtuous activities, and Epicurus still has to point to individual people and individual cases of people pursuing pleasurable activities. But the words provide a model which is understandable and serves as a target to work to achieve.