

The Absence of Sin

Post by "Rolf" of April 22, 2025 at 5:42 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

This has been a good thread and maybe not gotten to exactly the destination Rolf may have thought but it points out how important it is to be precise.

[Quote from Rolf](#)

There's nothing inherently despicable about living a life filled with pain, it's just misguided and unnecessary.

Even here, we have to balance the wording that Torquatus and Epicurus used about "blame":

Quote from Torquatus

On the other hand, we denounce with righteous indignation and dislike men who are so beguiled and demoralized by the charms of the pleasure of the moment, so blinded by desire, that they cannot foresee the pain and trouble that are bound to ensue; and equal blame belongs to those who fail in their duty through weakness of will, which is the same as saying through shrinking from toil and pain. These cases are perfectly simple and easy to distinguish. In a free hour, when our power of choice is untrammelled and when nothing prevents our being able to do what we like best, every pleasure is to be welcomed and every pain avoided. But in certain emergencies and owing to the claims of duty or the obligations of business it will frequently occur that pleasures have to be repudiated and annoyances accepted. The wise man therefore always holds in these matters to this principle of selection: he rejects pleasures to secure other greater pleasures, or else he endures pains to avoid worse pains.

Quote from Epicurus to Menoeceus

[133] For indeed who, think you, is a better man than he who holds reverent opinions concerning the gods, and is at all times free from fear of death, and has reasoned out the end ordained by nature? He understands that the limit of good things is easy to fulfill and easy to attain, whereas the course of ills is either short in time or slight in pain; he laughs at (destiny), whom some have introduced as the mistress of all things. (He thinks that with us lies the chief power in determining events, some of which happen by necessity) and some by chance, and some are within our control; for while necessity cannot be called to account, he sees that chance is inconstant, but that which is in our control is subject to no master, and to it are naturally attached praise and blame.

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Hmm, this is certainly an interesting counterpoint. You're right about the importance of precision in language - I appreciate your frankness!

These two quotes do sound rather uncharacteristically *harsh* to my ear. Although perhaps the former is a case of Cicero's embellishment. Epicurus using the word "blame" in the second quote makes sense to me, as I read it as him saying that we can only hold ourselves accountable for what is in our control. Feel free to correct me if I'm off-base here.