

Episode 288 - TD18 - Tusculan Disputations Part 3 - "Will The Wise Man Feel Grief Or Other Strong Emotions?"

Post by "Cassius" of July 3, 2025 at 9:43 PM

In this episode and next week as well we are dealing with questions about whether the wise man will experience grief, and whether the strong emotions should be considered to be a disease, topics on which the schools differed, and it's sometimes hard to tell Cicero's own views.

Here in [Academic Questions](#) is how Cicero explains the Stoic view (see especially the second paragraph):

Quote

X.

Zeno, then, was not at all a man like Theophrastus, to cut through the sinews of virtue; but, on the other hand, he was one who placed everything which could have any effect in producing a happy life in virtue alone, and who reckoned nothing else a good at all, and who called that honourable which was single in its nature, and the sole and only good. But as for all other things, although they were neither good nor bad, he divided them, calling some according to, and others contrary to nature. There were others which he looked upon as placed between these two classes, and which he called intermediate. Those which were according to nature, he taught his disciples, deserved to be taken, and to be considered worthy of a certain esteem. To those which were contrary to nature, he assigned a contrary character; and those of the intermediate class he left as neutrals, and attributed to them no importance whatever. But of those which he said ought to be taken, he considered some worthy of a higher estimation and others of a less. Those which were worthy of a higher esteem, he called preferred; those which were only worthy of a lower degree, he called rejected. And as he had altered all these things, not so much in fact as in name, so too he defined some actions as intermediate, lying between good deeds and sins, between duty and a violation of duty; — classing things done rightly as good actions, and things done wrongly (that is to say, sins) as bad actions. And several duties, whether discharged or neglected, he considered of an intermediate character, as I have already said. And whereas his predecessors had not placed every virtue in reason, but had said that some virtues were perfected by nature, or by habit, he placed them all in reason; and while they thought that those kinds of virtues which I have mentioned above could be separated,

he asserted that that could not be done in any manner, and affirmed that not only the practice of virtue (which was the doctrine of his predecessors), but the very disposition to it, was intrinsically beautiful; and that virtue could not possibly be present to any one without his continually practising it.

And while they did not entirely remove all perturbation of mind from man, (for they admitted that man did by nature grieve, and desire, and fear, and become elated by joy,) but only contracted it, and reduced it to narrow bounds; he maintained that the wise man was wholly free from all these diseases as they might be called. And as the ancients said that those perturbations were natural, and devoid of reason, and placed desire in one part of the mind and reason in another, he did not agree with them either; for he thought that all perturbations were voluntary, and were admitted by the judgment of the opinion, and that a certain unrestrained intemperance was the mother of all of them. And this is nearly what he laid down about morals.