

# Epicurus vs Aristotle: the Role of Reason vs Sensation Seeking?

Post by "Cassius" of December 8, 2025 at 8:06 PM

## [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Epicurus = "pleasure" is the telos (end) of the best life and the word "pleasure" leads most people to hear that Epicurus gave more importance to bodily sensation.

In my view you're no doubt right that "most people hear Epicurus to be saying that he gave more importance to bodily sensation" and in my view also those people are making very incorrect about what Epicurus was saying. There are ample reliable texts indicating how wrong they are.

## [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Aristotle = "living well and doing well" is the telos (end) of the best life and humans find their highest fulfillment in exercising reason, especially through contemplation.

And yes that is a key point about Aristotle, the response to which has many aspects but one of the primary of which is that there is nothing divine about human reason, and by focusing on it to the exclusion of the rest of the human, and of nature itself, is to divorce the mind from the body in a way that is totally unjustified, improper, and disastrous. One writer who makes that point very well is Cosma Raimondi. This was directed to the Stoics but much of it applies to Aristotle too:

## Quote

If we were indeed composed solely of a mind, I should be inclined to call Regulus "happy" and entertain the Stoic view that we should find happiness in virtue alone. But since we are composed of a mind *and* a body, why do they leave out of this account of human happiness something that is part of mankind and properly pertains to it? Why do they consider only the mind and neglect the body, when the body houses the mind and is the other half of what man is? If you are seeking the totality of something made up of various parts, and yet some part is missing, I cannot think it perfect and complete. We use the term 'human', I take it, to refer to a being with both a mind and a body. And in the same way that the body is not to be thought healthy when some part of it is sick, so man himself cannot be thought happy if he is suffering in some part of himself. As for their assigning happiness to the mind alone on the grounds that it is in

some sense the master and ruler of man's body, it is quite absurd to disregard the body when the mind itself often depends on the state and condition of the body and indeed can do nothing without it. Should we not deride someone we saw sitting on a throne and calling himself a king when he had no courtiers or servants? Should we think someone a fine prince whose servants were slovenly and misshapen? Yet those who would separate the mind from the body in defining human happiness and think that someone whose body is being savaged and tortured may still be happy are just as ludicrous.

I find it surprising that these clever Stoics did not remember when investigating the subject that they themselves were men. Their conclusions came not from what human nature demanded but from what they could contrive in argument. Some of them, in my view, placed so much reliance on their ingenuity and facility in debate that they did not concern themselves with what was actually relevant to the inquiry. They were carried away instead by their enthusiasm for intellectual display, and tended to write what was merely novel and surprising — things we might aspire to, but not ones we should spend any effort in attaining. Then there were some rather cantankerous individuals who thought that we should only aim for what they themselves could imitate or lay claim to. Nature had produced some boorish and inhuman philosophers whose senses had been dulled or cut off altogether, ones who took no pleasure in anything; and these people laid down that the rest of mankind should avoid what their own natural severity and austerity shrank from. Others subsequently entered the debate, men of great and various intellectual abilities, who all delivered a view on what constituted the supreme good according to their own individual disposition. But in the middle of all this error and confusion, Epicurus finally appeared to correct and amend the mistakes of the older philosophers and put forward his own true and certain teaching on happiness.