

To Be An Epicurean?

DE NATURA DEORUM, I. xxiv.

For What Would You Take To Cease To Be An Epicurean?

"For no consideration would I forsake the principles of Happiness and The Truth!"

faced with the alternative of either accepting these outrageous notions or surrendering the title of the school of your adoption. For what would you take to cease to be an Epicurean? 'For no consideration,' you reply, 'would I forsake the principles of happiness and the truth.' Then is Epicureanism the truth? For as to happiness I don't join issue, since in your view even divine happiness involves being bored to death with idleness. But where is the truth to be found? I suppose in an infinite number of worlds, some coming to birth and others hurled into ruin at every minutest moment of time? or in the indivisible particles that produce all the marvels of creation without any controlling nature or reason? But I am forgetting the indulgence which I began to

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Note how sarcastic Cicero is when he says that "in your view even divine happiness involves being bored to death with idleness." This illustrates that in many cases Cicero wasn't reporting factually on Epicurean doctrine with the view toward getting to the truth, he was ridiculing and argumentatively distorting positions in a way that no Epicurean would have ever accepted. And Cicero *knew* that he was distorting and falsifying, because in other sections of his works (Torquatus on the best life) Cicero correctly recorded that the best life involves "living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable?"

And yet Cicero's ridiculous distortion -- "being bored to death with idleness" is what a large section of modern Epicurean commentators teach is exactly what Epicurus taught as his "tranquility" model of the best life!

Post by "Charles" of October 1, 2019 at 11:15 AM

This is a pretty good source to derail that criticism. So much of my time spent talking about Epicureanism to other philosophical people ends up being a kangaroo court, where I'm the defense.