

# An Epicurean Study of Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics

Post by "Cassius" of October 8, 2022 at 10:28 AM

Quote from Don

That section also shows that Aristotle is NOT a fan of the emotions, Greek παθη pathe. Epicurus includes the pathe (feelings, emotions) of pleasure and pain as part of his Canon of Truth! Aristotle simply says they can't be trusted and young people get led astray by them. The two couldn't be farther apart!

Starting around 1095b, Aristotle appears to stake his flag against pleasure as the Good:

"The common run of people and the most vulgar identify [the highest good] with pleasure, and for that reason are satisfied with a life of enjoyment...a life suitable to cattle."

LOL! Oh, a life of enjoyment! Perish the thought!

He goes on to say that there are really three notable kinds of life:

- The life of enjoyment/pleasure
- The political life (remember, life in service to the polis)
- The contemplative life

However, Aristotle continues to refine his definition of the good and says "the good is a man's own possession which cannot easily be taken away from him." It seems to me something could not be more one's own than one's feelings of pleasure (and pain).

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This part reminds me of one of the things that I think is most important to stress early and often: that "pleasure" is a sweeping term that embraces every possible experience in life that we find desirable in itself. If it is desirable in itself, it is pleasurable. Once it is established that we are not just talking about immediate sensory stimulation it seems to me that the superiority of the Epicurean position is much more clear. Why would anyone do anything if they do not receive benefit from it, and what is "benefit" if not pleasure (under the Epicurean perspective in which all feelings are either pleasure or pain).

I think if I were in a debate with Aristotelians or any of them, that's a point I would want to stake out almost immediately before going in any other direction.