

Episode 206 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 14 - More On The Nature of Morality

Post by "Joshua" of December 17, 2023 at 4:56 AM

"Cicero seems to be honestly and entirely unaware of the firm basis for justice which Epicureanism provided. He can see nothing beyond the fear of punishment, and therefore the fear of detection, - and yet he has Torquatus say that the necessary things of life can be won without injustice. He omits the social contract as a basis of justice. He does not see the doctrine as a whole."

"Moreover Cicero's failure to explain or attack the Epicurean theory of justice and the social compact is a significant omission in his discussion of Epicurean virtue."

This is Mary Porter Packer's summation of Cicero on Epicurus and Justice. Was Cicero confusing morality with justice, and inferring that Epicurus' morality was based on mutual advantage? Cicero has his god-ordained moral law, but Epicurus looks to the covenants made by the multitude for his morality? Did he utterly fail to comprehend what Epicurus was actually saying!?

Mary Porter Packer does not directly address the "babble of the multitude" question. Her general summation of *De Finibus* is that Cicero is a baffled, misreading, and unreliable transmitter of Epicureanism, because his signal failure is in refusing to consider each of Epicurus' claims in light of the whole philosophy. So I am at a loss, except in this respect; if Cicero believed that Epicurus looked to the multitude for his understanding of morality, CICERO WAS WRONG.