

Episode 214 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 21 - Cicero Argues For An Ideal View of Friendship and Happiness Which Epicureans Reject

Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2024 at 7:44 PM

In the process of editing this episode I want to call out an interesting aspect of the discussion:

Joshua makes the point that, like Justice, friendship arises through natural experience over time. We brought that up initially on the point that some Epicureans argued that friendship arises from advantages, but changes over time. However I want to pursue another aspect of the analogy, insofar as it may shed light on the question: From the Epicurean perspective, does "friendship" necessarily mean "to the death"? We need to consider not only the question as to whether every friendship should mean that we should die for that friend (most of us would probably say "of course not"). But we also need to consider the general question: "Is it ever appropriate to terminate a friendship? Under what conditions?"

[PD37](#) and [PD38](#) go on at great length to explain how, when circumstances change and mutual advantage no longer exists, justice itself no longer exists. Should we take by analogy that when mutual advantage of friendship no longer exists, that friendship also can or should terminate?

I think we tend to underestimate the implications of [PD37](#) and [PD38](#), as we find it very hard not to "deify" justice and think that justice has a life of its own and should never be terminate or violated, despite what [PD37](#) and [PD38](#) say.

Do we have the same problem with friendship? Are we seduced by Cicero's examples of Orestes and others that if we are not willing to die for a friend then we are not true friends at all?

This possibility of terminating friendship when advantage changes seems to be at the heart of Cicero's attacks on Epicurean friendship, so attractive as Cicero's romantic notions might be (as to both friendship and justice) is Epicurus telling us to be ruthlessly practical and not to consider either justice or friendship to exist when the mutual advantage is no longer there?

I think we have here a very interesting question to unwind. Our discussion in the episode should be helpful, but is by no means the last word.