

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 13, 2024 at 7:11 PM

Another note while editing:

We have previously pointed out by referencing [Philebus](#) and Seneca that the anti-Epicureans argue that pleasure cannot be the goal of life because it has no limit - it can allegedly (when viewed in non-Epicurean terms) be made better by the addition of "more."

In this section of the text, Cicero makes a related argument: pleasure cannot be the basis of happiness because a man cannot be truly happy if he is constantly concerned about *losing* his happiness. In other words, since happiness allegedly cannot be "permanent," then we need to be constantly afraid of losing it, so the Epicurean cannot be truly happy because he is constantly afraid.

I don't think we've done enough to treat that argument, and I think it jumps out at you when you think about it that this is a large part of what [PD04](#) (there are others, but especially PD04) is all about:

[PD04](#). Pain does not last continuously in the flesh, but the acutest pain is there for a very short time, and even that which just exceeds the pleasure in the flesh does not continue for many days at once. But chronic illnesses permit a predominance of pleasure over pain in the flesh.

This observation, combined with the observation that seeing pleasure broadly as both stimulative *and* non-stimulative activities (seeing it broadly as "absence of pain") is how (as Torquatus says) the wise man is always going to have more reason for joy than for vexation.

Cicero stating the issue for us in this way is, and alleging the Epicureans are wrong in thinking that we can be confident of remaining until death in a condition of more pleasure than pain, is extremely helpful I think.

I am concerned that I am reading these sections of Cicero a little too quickly than they deserve to be read, especially at the beginning of the episode, but once you get past that into our discussion I think there is some extremely helpful material in this episode.