

# **Episode 225 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 30 - Cicero Argues That Commitment To Virtue Is A Bar To Pleasure**

**Post by "Joshua" of April 21, 2024 at 11:10 AM**



# The Guide of Life, Divine Pleasure

"Dux Vitae Diva Voluptas" – Lucretius Book Two, line 169



And for this cause we call **pleasure** the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize **pleasure** as the first good innate in us, and from **pleasure** we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to **pleasure** we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good. – Epicurus - Letter to Menoeceus

Not only Aristippus and his followers, but also Epicurus and his welcomed kinetic **pleasure**; I will mention what follows, to avoid speaking of the "storms" (of passion) and the "delicacies" which Epicurus often cites, and the "stimuli" which he mentions in his On the End-Goal. For he says "For I at least do not even know what I should conceive the good to be, if I eliminate the **pleasures** of taste, and eliminate the **pleasures** of sex, and eliminate the **pleasures** of listening, and eliminate the **pleasant** motions caused in our vision by a visible form. – Athenaeus – Deipnosophists XII p. 546E

The truth of the position that **pleasure** is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man 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? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the **pleasures** of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement. ... If then a life full of pain is the thing most to be avoided, it follows that to live in pain is the highest evil; and this position implies that a life of **pleasure** is the ultimate good. If then even the glory of the Virtues, on which all the other philosophers love to expatiate so eloquently, has in the last resort no meaning unless it be based on **pleasure**, whereas **pleasure** is the only thing that is intrinsically attractive and alluring, it cannot be doubted that **pleasure** is the one supreme and final Good and that **a life of happiness is nothing else than a life of pleasure**. – Cicero's Epicurean Spokesman Torquatus - "On Ends"

For instance, in that book which embraces all your teaching (for I shall now play the part of translator, so no one may think I am inventing) you say this: "For my part I find no meaning which I can attach to what is termed good, if I take away from it the **pleasures** obtained by taste, if I take away the **pleasures** which come from listening to music, if I take away too the charm derived by the eyes from the sight of figures in movement, or other **pleasures** by any of the senses in the whole man. Nor indeed is it possible to make such a statement as this – that it is **joy of the mind** which is alone to be reckoned as a good; for I understand by a mind in a state of joy, that it is so, when it has the hope of all the **pleasures** I have named – that is to say the hope that nature will be free to enjoy them without any blending of pain." – Cicero - Tusculan Disputations, III, 18.41

But since, as I say, the issue is not 'what is the means of happiness?' but 'what is happiness and what is the ultimate goal of our nature?', I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks, that **pleasure** is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues, which are inopportunately messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end, but the means to the end. – Diogenes of Oinoanda – the Inscription

He added that these same men were quite right in saying that the wise do everything for their own interests; that no sane man should engage in public affairs; that nothing was preferable to a life of tranquility crammed full of **pleasures**. – Cicero - In Defense of Publius Sestius 10.23

[Epicurus'] words are these: "That which produces a **jubilant** unsurpassed is the nature of good, if you apply your mind rightly and then stand firm and do not stroll about (a jibe at the Peripatetics), prating meaninglessly about the good." – Plutarch - That Epicurus Actually Makes A Pleasant Life Impossible, 7, p. 1091A