

# Sunday June 2nd, Zoom Discussion: "Is Pain Properly Considered To Be An Evil?"

Post by "Cassius" of June 2, 2025 at 11:59 AM

## [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Cicero is a bit of a mix, and even a few parts of the Torquatus section have Stoic elements (for example, the father could have banished his son, rather than killing him).

Just to make a record on this one in case someone wants to discuss this further, I very much disagree that this example is contrary to Epicurean philosophy. It's consistent with Epicurus for the very reason that Torquatus explains, and which is the reason that he cites it, in that all questions in life have to be put to the test of what will happen if one takes them as opposed to not taking them. In every question you add up the expected consequences and it's up to you to choose among the resulting mixes of pleasures and pains that will result.

In this case we can see the choice of the elder Torquatus to execute his son for violating the rules of engagement as a variation of the "Trolley problem." it would have been completely legitimate for the elder Torquatus to judge that if he spared his son, the resulting erosion of military discipline would have doomed all of Rome to the defeat of its army and the destruction of many thousands or more of the Roman citizenry.

Torquatus does not allege that his ancestor took special pleasure in the loss of his son - the implication is the opposite - that he judged that the "pleasure" or happiness, in the full sense of those words - would be greater in total even given the loss of his son.

Cicero's argument in not explaining this more fully is very similar to his ridicule of Epicurus for saying that one can find it "sweet" to be roasted in the bull of Phalaris. Even here where Torquatus is allowed to speak about his ancestors, Cicero is omitting the full extent of the explanation and thereby making it look ridiculous and contradictor, when in fact it is not.

The Epicurean point is the wider one, and there's no reason to back away from the elder Torquatus' decision, much less to call it "Stoic." A Stoic might well have decided to spare his son on the ground that the virtue of loyalty to family is unbreachable. Or a Stoic might have looked to "providence" or "fate" and kick the decision to them.

What Epicurus is telling us to do is to be logical and consistent in our identification of the goal of life, and to evaluate ALL the consequences before we make our decision.