

Episode 288 - TD18 - Tusculan Disputations Part 3 - "Will The Wise Man Feel Grief Or Other Strong Emotions?"

Post by "Godfrey" of June 25, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Are we aware of any extent Epicurean texts on the subject of grief?

Quote

But he makes the alleviation of grief depend on two things, a ceasing to think on evil, and a turning to the contemplation of pleasure. For he thinks that the mind may possibly be under the power of reason, and follow her directions; he forbids us, therefore, to mind trouble, and calls us off from sorrowful reflections: he throws a mist over our eyes to hinder us from the contemplation of misery.

Except for the last phrase, this makes sense if you think of it in terms of focusing on pleasant memories of the subject of grief, and not dwelling on the unpleasant memories. As he continues beyond this quote, though, he seems to be describing bad Stoic advice to distract from grief by thinking about unrelated things to drive grief from your mind. To my understanding, this technique generally doesn't end well as it just represses the Feelings.

[PD40](#) comes to mind: *All those who have the power to obtain the greatest confidence from their neighbors also live with each other most enjoyably in the most steadfast trust; and experiencing the strongest fellowship they do not lament as pitiful the untimely end of those who pass away.* Which seems to me to say that in the context of both you and the departed having lived good Epicurean lives, there's really no reason for excessive grieving. As stand-alone advice it becomes muddled, as do so many ideas when presented by Cicero.

Comparing this to the wise man on the rack: the initial pain can't be avoided, but having a solid foundation in the philosophy, remembering the good feelings you've had (and shared, in the case of grief) can balance and/or overcome that pain.