

Episode 295 - Plutarch's Absurd Interpretation of Epicurean Absence of Pain

Post by "Don" of August 17, 2025 at 6:01 AM

[Plutarch \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#)

Plutarch was a prominent citizen and even the priest of Apollo at Delphi, being instrumental in reviving and reconstructing the site. He traveled extensively, and was a strong proponent and student of Plato's philosophy.

Plutarch's anti-Stoic and anti-Epicurean writings "are often captious and in many instances betray a less than fair engagement with the views being opposed (see Warren 2011, 290–293 but also Kechagia 2011, 135–294 for a vindication of Plutarch's polemics in *Against Colotes*)."

"both Stoicism and Epicureanism were still thriving, mainly in virtue of their ethics. Plutarch wanted to show that Stoic and Epicurean ethics rest on mistaken assumptions about human nature and reality, which render their ethical doctrines useless"

"Two further features of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy appear to annoy Plutarch considerably: first, their dismissal of the aporetic/dialectical spirit that Socrates embodies, and which Plutarch regards as central to Plato's philosophy and also to his teacher's Ammonius (*De E* 385C; see also below sections 2, 3), and second, the Stoic and Epicurean adoption of a corporealist or materialist metaphysics and their rejection of the intelligible realm (that comprises God, Forms, intellects, souls), which was essential to Platonism."

"Ironically, perhaps, Plutarch's polemical writings are of great value for us today also for the many quotations they contain from Stoics, Epicurus, and other authors whose works were not preserved into modern times, and for his reports and paraphrases of their views drawn from works no longer available to us. Were it not for Plutarch, our grasp of Stoic and Epicurean philosophy would be much less extensive than it is, and our ability to reconstruct and appreciate their ideas much reduced."