

# Sunday November 9, 2025 - Zoom Discussion 12:30 PM EST - Epicurus on Good And Evil

Post by "Cassius" of November 12, 2025 at 6:01 AM

Here's a much better example of the way to understand this issue as stated by an articulate Roman Epicurean in 50 BC.

After over a hundred years of thinking about what Epicurus taught, you can place the key ideas in the context of how the wise man is always happy. Cicero identifies in Tusculan Disputations that how the wise man is in fact always happy is the most important question in philosophy.

The point about pain is not to callously say that what is terrible is "easy to endure," but that pain ultimately has no unbreakable power over us because it is almost always manageable, and when it is truly not manageable we can always defeat it by departing from life:

Quote from Torquatus in On Ends Book 1

XIX. At the same time this Stoic doctrine can be stated in a form which we do not object to, and indeed ourselves endorse. For Epicurus thus presents his Wise Man who is always happy: (3) his desires are kept within bounds; (2) death he disregards; (1) he has a true conception, untainted by fear, of the Divine nature; (4) he does not hesitate to depart from life, if that would better his condition. Thus equipped he enjoys perpetual pleasure, for there is no moment when the pleasures he experiences do not outbalance the pains; since he remembers the past with gratitude, grasps the present with a full realization of its pleasantness, and does not rely upon the future; he looks forward to it, but finds his true enjoyment in the present.

And I would agree with the thrust of Don's comments that it does indeed appear that the Epicureans saw these four aspects as particularly important. But the four have to be stated clearly in order to be persuasive.

Here they are again in different order stated in much more full terms from earlier in On Ends:

Quote

XII. Again, the truth that pleasure is the supreme good can be most easily apprehended from the following consideration. (3) Let us imagine an individual in the enjoyment of pleasures great, numerous and constant, both mental and bodily, with no pain to thwart or threaten them; I ask what circumstances can we describe as more excellent

than these or more desirable? A man whose circumstances are such must needs possess, as well as other things, a robust mind subject to no fear of death or pain, because (2) death is apart from sensation, and (4) pain when lasting is usually slight, when oppressive is of short duration, so that its temporariness reconciles us to its intensity, and its slightness to its continuance. When in addition we suppose that such a man is (1) in no awe of the influence of the gods, and does not allow his past pleasures to slip away, but takes delight in constantly recalling them, what circumstance is it possible to add to these, to make his condition better?

So there's plenty of information from which to flesh out the full meaning of the fourth item of the list without just saying "what's terrible is easy to endure." Cicero is using the same grouping of four to identify the best way of life / how the wise man is always happy.