

Episode 308 - TD36 - Tracing Epicurus' Key Ideas From the Principal Doctrines To The Tetrapharmakon To Cicero's Epicurean Speakers

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Welcome to Episode 308 of Lucretius Today. This is a podcast dedicated to the poet Lucretius, who wrote "On The Nature of Things," the most complete presentation of Epicurean philosophy left to us from the ancient world. Each week we walk you through the Epicurean texts, and we discuss how Epicurean philosophy can apply to you today. If you find the Epicurean worldview attractive, we invite you to join us in the study of Epicurus at EpicureanFriends.com, where we discuss this and all of our podcast episodes.

This week we continue covering Cicero's "Tusculan Disputations" from an Epicurean perspective. Today we continue our discussion with the second half of [section 10 of Part 5](#) where Cicero criticizes Metrodorus and Epicurus for allegedly making high-sounding statements by being inconsistent for involving pleasure and pain in them.

As we discussed last week, Cicero identifies this question of whether and how the wise man can always be happy as one of the most important - perhaps the most important - in philosophy.

Today we will look at the four points that are summarized all-too-briefly in the "Tetrapharmakon," and we will expand on the meaning of each branch by referring to the full text of the first four [Principal Doctrines](#), supporting statements in the letters and fragments of Epicurus, and to where Cicero has Torquatus reference them in Book One of On Ends, including:

Quote

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.

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?

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