

'Their God Is The Belly' / "The Root of All Good Is The Pleasure Of The Stomach" And Similar Attributions

Post by "Cassius" of November 25, 2025 at 11:29 AM

[Quote from Don](#)

If we accept "direct" quotes from Cicero, should we not probably accept "direct" quotes from Plutarch?

This is an interesting topic in itself, but depending on the context I would definitely trust Cicero before I trusted Plutarch, depending on two factors that stand out to me:

- If Cicero is letting an Epicurean speaker go on at length, I'd give it more deference. Plutarch seems to rarely if ever do that. Plutarch's always on the attack and does not profess any degree of neutrality.
- We know Cicero was living at a time when he was talking to strong and dedicated Epicureans and he was in fact depending on Cassius Longinus for all his political hopes, so he had strong motivations to stay in line. I'm not aware that there's any reason to think Plutarch had any motivation to be fair to Epicureans at all.
- But the main issue would be whether the alleged statement has analogs in the core texts, and I just don't see that in this case. In fact, when Epicurus speaks so strongly of a simple diet and also the pleasures of philosophy and study of nature as to his primary sources of happiness, it appears to me that those contradict any assertion that the physical pleasures of the stomach outweigh all others. If he had been going down the road of looking to essentials, you're going to die a lot sooner if you miss water or air than missing "food" (which seems more at issue in referring to the "stomach," though I can see water being included in the stomach).