

Episode 314 - TD41 - Cicero Challenges Epicurus: Can Pleasures Really Overcome Pains?

Post by “Cassius” of December 31, 2025 at 7:16 AM

There is a section in this weeks text that might be of special interest to [Don](#), since i recall him mentioning the issue several times.

In [this section of Tusculan Disputations](#) Cicero is sharply critical, but I find particularly interesting the "for I do not apprehend how past pleasures can allay present evils" as that is a direct challenge for us to explain the common reference in Epicurus to using the pleasures of the past to "offset" or "array against" current pains.

Quote

Nor did he take any trouble to provide himself with those remedies which might have enabled him to bear pain; such as firmness of mind, a shame of doing anything base, exercise, and the habit of patience, precepts of courage, and a manly hardiness: but he says that he supports himself on the single recollection of past pleasures, as if any one, when the weather was so hot as that he was scarcely able to bear it, should comfort himself by recollecting that he was once in my country Arpinum, where he was surrounded on every side by cooling streams: for I do not apprehend how past pleasures can allay present evils. But when he says that a wise man is always happy, who would have no right to say so if he were consistent with himself, what may they not do, who allow nothing to be desirable, nothing to be looked on as good but what is honourable? Let, then, the Peripatetics and old Academics follow my example, and at length leave off muttering to themselves; and openly and with a clear voice let them be bold to say, that a happy life may not be inconsistent with the agonies of Phalaris's bull.