

Current Series - Summarizing Epicurean Answers to Academic Questions

Post by “DaveT” of January 30, 2026 at 2:20 PM

[Cassius](#) This closing item in the post seems so important to me. I'd like to pose questions on it BUT since you asked for comments on your summary, perhaps my reply ought to be somewhere else. Please move it if you think appropriate

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Understanding that the goal of life is happiness through pleasure allows us to see that virtue is necessary for happiness, but that understanding what virtue means is essential, in that virtue is not a set of absolute that is the same for all people in all places and at all times, but that virtue is contextual and is in fact whatever conduct that in practice leads to living happily.

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As I read the Summary, I looked for some sort of amalgam or a way to build Cicero's Virtues into the above quote. For example, let me pose this question: What were Academic/Stoic Virtues? The Internet tells me they were Wisdom (prudence), Courage, Temperance, and Justice. I agree these virtues can change with cultures. Yet, in our school, we certainly must look to the culture we are actually living in for the definition of OUR virtues. A person won't get far using deeply personal antisocial interpretations of virtues for himself and still find happiness via acquiring pleasure. More likely that person will end up incarcerated by the larger community.

So, given our Western Industrialized Educated Rich Democratic culture, which sets the guidelines for our behavior, assume that the four virtues are uniformly agreed upon. Now, can we not agree that those four virtues are the necessary, and I mean necessary, virtues we each need to pursue in order to find happiness as Epicurus defined it?

This gives us each an indispensable mechanism to pursue pleasure. It uses the virtues to help us define and use to acquisition of pleasure. Epicurus, as far as I understand him, has no problem acknowledging the usefulness of the virtue of Prudence to achieve his definition of happiness. So would he not object to the following statement?

As a practical matter, the Epicurean pursuit of pleasure **DEPENDS** on each of us gaining some measure of the four virtues in our private lives in order to experience pleasure.