

Circumstantial (Indirect) and Direct Evidence / Dogmatism vs Skepticism

Post by "Cassius" of March 13, 2026 at 11:27 AM

As to Emerson's statements about consistency Joshua reminded me in the most recent podcast (324 - not yet posted as of this writing) about what Cicero had to say in [Tusculan Disputations](#). In this section he's arguing against Epicurus, but what he's saying about consistency I think most of us would agree with. I think Epicurus would agree too, and that Epicurus would defend his position on the grounds that he WAS being consistent. This particular argument shows why the meaning of "Good" is so important, and why it is so important to understand Epicurus' argument that all good ultimately resolves down to "pleasure." And that leads us directly to the expansive meaning that Epicurus gives to the term "pleasure," refusing to restrict it to physical stimulation (as Cicero accuses Epicurus of doing) but including within "pleasure" all living experience that is not painful:

Quote from Cicero in Tusculan Disputations

X.

But it is the duty of one who would argue accurately, to consider not what is said, but what is said consistently. As in that very opinion which we have adopted in this discussion, namely, that every good man is always happy; it is clear what I mean by good men: I call those both wise and good men, who are provided and adorned with every virtue. Let us see, then, who are to be called happy. I imagine, indeed, that those men are to be called so, who are possessed of good without any alloy of evil: nor is there any other notion connected with the word that expresses happiness, but an absolute enjoyment of good without any evil. Virtue cannot attain this, if there is anything good besides itself: for a crowd of evils would present themselves, if we were to allow poverty, obscurity, humility, solitude, the loss of friends, acute pains of the body, the loss of health, weakness, blindness, the ruin of one's country, banishment, slavery, to be evils: for a wise man may be afflicted by all these evils, numerous and important as they are, and many others also may be added; for they are brought on by chance, which may attack a wise man: but if these things are evils, who can maintain that a wise man is always happy, when all these evils may light on him at the same time? I therefore do not easily agree with my friend Brutus, nor with our common masters, nor those ancient ones, Aristotle, Speusippus, Xenocrates, Polemon, who reckon all that I have mentioned above as evils, and yet they say that a wise man is always happy; nor can I allow them, because they are charmed with this beautiful and illustrious title, which would very well become Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, to persuade my mind, that strength, health, beauty, riches, honours, power, with the

beauty of which they are ravished, are contemptible, and that all those things which are the opposites of these are not to be regarded. Then might they declare openly, with a loud voice, that neither the attacks of fortune, nor the opinion of the multitude, nor pain, nor poverty, occasion them any apprehensions; and that they have everything within themselves, and that there is nothing whatever which they consider as good but what is within their own power. Nor can I by any means allow the same person, who falls into the vulgar opinion of good and evil, to make use of these expressions, which can only become a great and exalted man. Struck with which glory, up starts Epicurus, who, with submission to the Gods, thinks a wise man always happy. He is much charmed with the dignity of this opinion, but he never would have owned that, had he attended to himself: for what is there more inconsistent, than for one who could say that pain was the greatest or the only evil, to think also that a wise man can possibly say in the midst of his torture, How sweet is this! We are not, therefore, to form our judgment of philosophers from detached sentences, but from their consistency with themselves, and their ordinary manner of talking.