

# Clement on Epicurus' And Other Philosophers Opinions As To The Chief Good

Post by "Cassius" of May 20, 2026 at 7:22 PM

I came across a text today that I would drop in here as it's either totally new to me or I had forgotten it. I don't know whether this translation is reliable either as it seems clunky. But it came to my attention in regard to Hieronymus. It seems very loosely and inaccurately written but it covers a lot of points about chief goods and the lifke. How in the heck did a Peripatetic end up concluding that "absence of pain" should be considered the chief good?

[Quote from Clement on The Philosophers' Opinions On The Chief Good](#)

## Chapter 21. Opinions of Various Philosophers on the Chief Good

[Epicurus](#), in placing [happiness](#) in not being hungry, or thirsty, or cold, uttered that godlike word, saying impiously that he would fight in these points even with Father Jove; teaching, as if it were the case of pigs that live in filth and not that of rational [philosophers](#), that [happiness](#) was victory. For of those that are ruled by pleasure are the Cyrenaics and [Epicurus](#); for these expressly said that to live pleasantly was the chief end, and that pleasure was the only perfect good. [Epicurus](#) also says that the removal of pain is pleasure; and says that that is to be preferred, which first attracts from itself to itself, being, that is, wholly in motion. Dinomachus and Callipho said that the chief end was for one to do what he could for the attainment and enjoyment of pleasure; and Hieronymus the Peripatetic said the great end was to live unmolested, and that the only final good was [happiness](#); and Diodorus likewise, who belonged to the same [sect](#), pronounces the end to be to live undisturbed and well. [Epicurus](#) indeed, and the Cyrenaics, say that pleasure is the first duty; for it is for the sake of pleasure, they say, that [virtue](#) was introduced, and produced pleasure. According to the followers of Calliphon, [virtue](#) was introduced for the sake of pleasure, but that subsequently, on seeing its own beauty, it made itself equally prized with the first principle, that is, pleasure.

But the Aristotelians lay it down, that to live in accordance with [virtue](#) is the end, but that neither [happiness](#) nor the end is reached by every one who has [virtue](#). For the wise man, vexed and involved in involuntary mischances, and wishing gladly on these accounts to flee from life, is neither fortunate nor [happy](#). For [virtue](#) needs time; for that is not acquired in one day which exists [only] in the perfect man since, as they say, a child is never [happy](#). But [human](#) life is a perfect time, and therefore [happiness](#) is

completed by the three kinds of [good](#) things. Neither, then, the [poor](#), nor the mean nor even the diseased, nor the slave, can be one of them.

Again, on the other hand, Zeno the Stoic thinks the end to be living according to [virtue](#); and, Cleanthes, living agreeably to nature in the right exercise of reason, which he held to consist of the selection of things according to nature. And Antipatrus, his friend, supposes the end to consist in choosing continually and unswervingly the things which are according to nature, and rejecting those contrary to nature. Archedamus, on the other hand, explained the end to be such, that in selecting the greatest and chief things according to nature, it was impossible to overstep it. In addition to these, Panætius pronounced the end to be, to live according to the means given to us by nature. And finally, Posidonius said that it was to live engaged in contemplating the [truth](#) and order of the [universe](#), and forming himself as he best can, in nothing influenced by the irrational part of his [soul](#). And some of the later [Stoics](#) defined the great end to consist in living agreeably to the constitution of man. Why should I mention Aristo? He said that the end was indifference; but what is indifferent simply abandons the indifferent. Shall I bring forward the opinions of Herillus? Herillus states the end to be to live according to science. For some think that the more recent [disciples](#) of the Academy define the end to be, the steady abstraction of the mind to its own impressions. Further, Lycus the Peripatetic used to say that the final end was the [true joy](#) of the [soul](#); as Leucimus, that it was the [joy](#) it had in what was [good](#). Critolaus, also a Peripatetic, said that it was the perfection of a life flowing rightly according to nature, referring to the perfection accomplished by the three kinds according to tradition.

We must, however, not rest satisfied with these, but endeavour as we best can to adduce the doctrines laid down on the point by the naturalist; for they say that Anaxagoras of Clazomenæ affirmed [contemplation](#) and the freedom flowing from it to be the end of life; Heraclitus the Ephesian, complacency. The Pontic Heraclides relates, that Pythagoras taught that the [knowledge](#) of the perfection of the numbers was [happiness](#) of the [soul](#). The Abderites also teach the [existence](#) of an end. Democritus, in his work *On the Chief End*, said it was cheerfulness, which he also called well-being, and often exclaims, *For delight and its absence are the boundary of those who have reached full age*; Hecatæus, that it was sufficiency to one's self; Apollodotus of [Cyzicum](#), that it was delectation; as Nausiphanes, that it was undauntedness, for he said that it was this that was called by Democritus imperturbability. In addition to these still, Diotimus declared the end to be perfection of what is [good](#), which he said was termed well-being. Again, Antisthenes, that it was humility. And those called Annicereans, of the Cyrenaic succession, laid down no definite end for the whole of life; but said that to each action belonged, as its proper end, the pleasure accruing from the action. These Cyrenaics reject [Epicurus'](#) definition of pleasure, that is the removal of pain, calling that the condition of a dead man; because we [rejoice](#) not only on account of pleasures, but companionships and distinctions; while [Epicurus](#) thinks that all [joy](#) of the [soul](#) arises

from previous sensations of the flesh. Metrodorus, in his book *On the Source of Happiness in Ourselves being greater than that which arises from Objects*, says: What else is the good of the [soul](#) but the sound state of the flesh, and the sure hope of its continuance?