

SOE15 - Diathesis

Post by "Cassius" of December 31, 2019 at 11:42 AM

I see Martin Ferguson Smith on the [Oinoanda.cat website](#) has:

Fr. 112

The sum of happiness consists in our disposition, of which we are master. Military service is dangerous and one is subordinate to others. Public speaking is full of agitation and nervousness as to whether one can convince. Why then do we pursue an occupation like this, which is under control of others?

So that means:

(1) This is a fragment which he wasn't able to place clearly in context.

(2) We'd have to know how confident MFS word of this wording.

(3) "The sum of happiness consists in our disposition" is an extremely broad statement that seems to go further than anything we have read in Epicurus' letters, in Diogenes Laertius, or Lucretius, or anything that Cicero quoted. Before taking it as widely as you are taking it I think we'd need to reflect on the implication of there being nothing else which goes that far, and much else that can be read to be much more narrow and contextual, especially since as written this could easily be interpreted as something akin to stoicism, which we know Epicurus was not.

(4) As for the rest of the statement, to which we do not have further answer or explanation, I would argue that there are legitimate Epicurean reasons why someone would choose to pursue military action or public speaking, and that Epicurean philosophy does not stand for a blanket denunciation of these in all circumstances, such as when they are needed for the survival or happiness of ourselves and our friends. Cassius Longinus and other Epicureans he cited to Cicero, as well as Cicero's own example of Torquatus, did not reach the conclusion that Epicurean philosophy was incompatible with these things, at least when needed.

So where I see these issues going is more toward something like:

We should strive to be master of our dispositions just like we strive to master all our circumstances toward the goal of living pleasurably.

As is this one is going to be read by most people as something akin to Stoicism.