

Cicero's Presentation of Epicurean Ethics - Fake News?

Post by "Cassius" of March 11, 2017 at 6:10 PM

[February 26 at 3:45pm](#) ****"Cicero's Presentation of Epicurean Ethics" - Fake News?***

I don't have time for as long a discussion as this deserves, but I want to highlight the attached excerpt from Edith Packer's "Cicero's Presentation of Epicurean Ethics." The topic is a key authority for our understanding of Epicurean Ethics, the presentation by Torquatus in Cicero's "On Ends."

In his discourse Torquatus states:

"The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain. What possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain. He will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement."

But Packer demurs and criticizes Torquatus harshly:

"But the total effect [of this passage] is not really Epicurean. This is true partly because of the excessive emphasis on luxurious pleasures ...[and] partly because of the absence of comment on the happiness of the tranquil life. There is no hint of the difficult intellectual asceticism which Epicurus considers necessary to the attainment of a life free from disturbance."

To this my personal reply to Packer is: "Fake news!"

We are all today familiar with the term "fake news" from all sides of the political spectrum. As unpleasant as that subject is to discuss, a great liberating wind is sweeping through the twenty-first century in that people of all persuasions are coming to see that the "gatekeepers of truth" have never merited the trust that they have claimed for generations.

In deciding between Packer and Cicero we should ask: Who had access to more Epicurean texts? Who had more access to Epicurean scholars? Who visited Athens at the height of Epicurean philosophy and learned from those who were committed to the philosophy? Packer or Cicero?

It is certainly possible that Packer is correct and Cicero is not. But if Packer is right then we are looking not at innocent error, but in fact “Fake News” of the highest order, spun by a lawyer (Cicero) for purposes of undermining Epicurean philosophy. But would Cicero have dared to stretch his own credibility by writing such a distortion in a world filled with Epicureans amply equipped to dispute him?

My personal view is that Cicero (or the source from which he copied) was correct. Torquatus was accurately describing the Epicurean model of a life of pleasure as the ultimate good. In turn, Packer is furthering the modern majority academic view -a great distortion which insists on viewing Epicurean philosophy through anti-Epicurean eyes.

Numbers of quotes can be marshaled on both sides of this issue, but my analysis starts with the premise that Epicurus expected others to understand that when he spoke of pleasure (which Torquatus has earlier stated is so plainly desirable that it needs no argument to support) he included in that term all types of pleasure, including those which some categorize as “of motion” and “static.” (I use quotes because I follow those who argue that these categories were not of great significance to Epicurus himself).

Most interpreters fail to explain to modern readers that Epicurus was speaking at a time and in a context where every educated person would understand the preliminary arguments. The leading philosophers, especially Plato in his “[Philebus](#),” had advanced the challenge that pleasure CANNOT be considered a candidate for the “highest good” or the “goal of life.” Plato argued that this is true because pleasure (allegedly) has no “limit” – we always want more. The Platonic argument concludes that nothing which has no limit (an “end point”) can be considered to be a “highest good” because no type or status of pleasure can be considered to be “the highest.”

Epicurus lived in a world that held Plato in great esteem, and so in disagreeing Epicurus logically would have formulated his theory of pleasure to defeat the Platonic argument. Epicurus did that in large part by pointing out two major points:

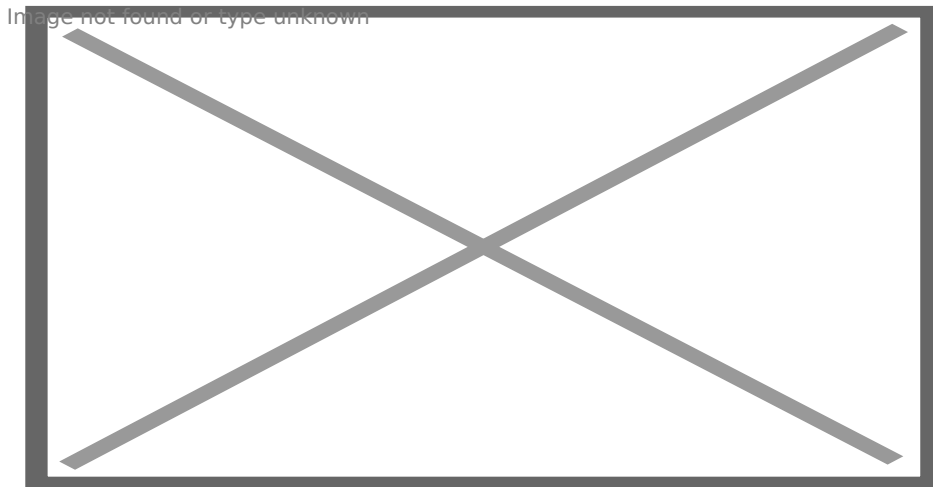
(1) Nature gives living beings only two types of feelings: pleasure and pain. Thus to a living being experiencing any feelings at all, the absence of one amounts to the presence of the other. If we could measure the total experience of any living being at any time, the “absence of pain” that being was experiencing would constitute in quantity the exact measure of the amount of pleasure that being is experiencing. Why is this important? Because:

2) The Platonic objection that pleasure has no limit is wrong. In contrast to false and speculative models such as are specialized in by idealists, Epicurus suggested that we consider life as a vessel, with the liquid content of the vessel being all of the numerous types of pleasure that are available in life. A vessel (like a man) is a real thing, and a vessel can be filled to the top with liquid, just as a life can be filled with pleasures. After the vessel is filled, all that is then poured into it amounts only to variation, not an increase in the quantity or quality of pleasure. Thus the use of terms like purity, absence of pain (aponia) and smoothness / tranquility (ataraxia) are only descriptive adjectives/adverbs for the desirable state of maintenance of a vessel: that of

holding its contents filled to the top, without leaking, overflowing, or under-filling.

Seen in these terms, the goal of life thus defined is not a "higher" or "mysterious" state of pleasure different from that which people ordinarily understand as pleasurable, and this goal requires no opaque terminology to describe it. Rather, the desired state / highest life - the model which serves as a guide, is that of a life experienced when filled to the top with pleasures of all kinds, a life conducted as most nearly possible without leaking or spilling (ataraxia for those who must use a Greek word) or under-filling (aponia).

So in my view Cicero was right and Packer was wrong. The goal of life identified by Epicurus was just as testified to by Torquatus, the same goal aptly summarized separately by Cicero himself : "a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasure."



["Cicero's Presentation of Epicurean Ethics" - Fake News?](#)

I don't have time for as long a discussion as this deserves, but I want to highlight the attached excerpt from Edith Packer's "Cicero's Presentation of Epicurean...
NEWEPICUREAN.COM

[Like](#) *Show more reactions*

[Comment](#) [Share](#)

[7](#) Jason Baker, Matt Jackson and 5 others

Comments

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) or type unknown

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Here is De Witt  [Packer](#)

<https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3...hAsVLyhBdpQRFkw>

[Cicero's Presentation of Epicurean Ethics](#) by Mary N. Porter Packer -...

DOCUMENTSLIDE.COM

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [Remove Preview](#) · [2](#) · [February 27 at 6:28am](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Cicero's Presentation of Epicurean Ethics. New York, The Columbia University Press, 1938. Pp. 127. Columbia Diss. This study is most commendable. It is clearly written and well printed, acutely reasoned and amply documented. The treatment confines itself to De Finibus I-II and is divided into two chapters: 1. Cicero's Presentation of Epicurean Philosophy in De Finibus I. 2. Cicero's Critique of Epicurean Philosophy, Presented in De Finibus I and II. Each chapter concludes with a summary, and the text of Epicurus himself is abundantly cited. The conclusion is that Cicero failed "to understand Epicureanism as a consistently unified philosophy (p. 81)," but is acquitted of having been "deliberately and intentionally unfair (p. 119)." It is only to this acquittal that I take exception. Every debater has the choice of arguing to reveal the truth in its entirety or of arguing to make points. The former method is adapted to the Supreme Court, the latter to a trial by jury. Cicero was a crafty old trial lawyer and he deliberately argued to make points, because he was pleading before a reading audience, which functions like a jury, and his shrewd legal mind had long discerned the vulnerability of Epicureanism before this style of attack. His attitude was that of William J. Bryan toward biological evolution, and his pleadings are comparable to a Scopes trial, but I do not believe he could have misrepresented the truth so successfully had he not understood it completely. In the Scopes trial, the crafty old lawyer was on the opposite side-Clarence Darrow. NORMAN W. DEWITT. VICTORIA COLLEGE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [February 27 at 6:31am](#)

[Cassius Amicus](#) or type unknown

[Cassius Amicus](#) Yep. That is where i first learned of this article.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [February 27 at 6:32am](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

Jimmy Daltrey De Witt appears to be saying that Cicero indeed knew Epicureanism very well, but willfully misrepresented it. So yes, Cicero probably did know the texts better than Packer, and chose to portray the Epicureans falsely. The "continuous enjoyment of vivid pleasures" strikes me as a caricature. Epicurus did not advocate making a habit of stuffing yourself with wine and lobster.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [February 27 at 7:23am](#)

Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus And it is not necessary to stuff oneself with wine and lobster to live in continuous vivid pleasures, which is the point that is lost on those who insist that pleasure is a disreputable goal.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [February 27 at 7:33am](#)

Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Further, Dewitt is not saying that that the misrepresentations and false conclusions are in Torquatus' presentation - it is in Cicero's commentary, generally delivered by himself or a non-Epicurean character, where the presentation and summaries are unbalanced.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [February 27 at 7:36am](#) · [Edited](#)

Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Probably a minor point but worth making nonetheless. One of Cicero's most frequent correspondents, and possibly his publisher, was Atticus the devout Epicurean. There's no way to resolve any of this, but it seems much more likely to me that the Atticus / Cicero relationship would have disposed Cicero to express his disagreements via direct commentary rather than by outright fabrications of his prime correspondent's philosophy. Cicero was not writing these commentaries at a time when he could lightly dismiss the effects of upsetting his friends unnecessarily.

<https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%...TWp6pfd8MuahCEU>

[Atticus and the Publication of Cicero's Works on JSTOR](#)

John J. Phillips, Atticus and the Publication of Cicero's Works, The Classical World, Vol. 79, No. 4 (Mar. - Apr., 1986), pp. 227-237

JSTOR.ORG

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Remove Preview](#) · [1](#) · [February 27 at 8:19am](#) · [Edited](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

Jimmy Daltrey Interesting how people read things differently. I read "vivid pleasures" as in external pleasures, food etc, it could also be an internal sense of pleasure. I think Packer took it to be the first also, hence her comments that Epicurus' asceticism was being down played.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 27 at 2:05pm](#) · [Edited](#)


Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus Yes that's exactly right Jimmy. It almost seems like people who are disposed for whatever reason to look at pleasure from a negative outlook are going to end up stoic-oriented and be suspicious of pleasure, always interpreting it negatively or restrictively. I think Epicurus was the opposite - taking pleasure as Nature's "go" signal, and therefore sanctioned by nature, the tendency is to follow nature and "go" unless the practical results of temporary pleasure are followed by too much pain. And that's another angle - some people seem to think that any pleasure at all is going to bring unbearable pain, and that all pain is unbearable, so that the goal is to suppress all pain at ANY costs, even if that means having no pleasure.

You used the word "internal" but Epicurus is very clear that "mental" pleasure is pleasure, and in fact often more intense ("vivid"?) than physical pleasure.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [February 27 at 1:26pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

Jimmy Daltrey The Stoics were more suspicious of desire than pleasure. According to AA Long, pleasure was nice to have but one could be a good person (and hence a tranquil person) with or without it as long as one didn't lust after it. You are 100% right that mental pleasure is glossed over when it should be central. I'd choose a good conversation in preference to an ice cream. (although good conversation with ice cream is good  type unknown

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 27 at 2:08pm](#) · [Edited](#)

Cassius Amicus type unknown

Cassius Amicus I largely agree with what you wrote Jimmy and I have tremendous respect for AA Long but presuming he said that (you haven't listed a cite) he presumably was speaking broadly and/or making the point that the Stoics really didn't like either one, as they are distractions from their single goal of virtue(?)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 27 at 5:17pm](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) or type unknown

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) I'll pull out a reference. Stoic virtue is the same as Epicurean virtue, the former have ataraxia incidental to virtue, the latter have virtue instrumental in obtaining happiness. Virtue is no more and no less than "practical wisdom", prudence, justice...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 27 at 5:45pm](#)

[Eric 'Siggy' Scott](#) or type unknown

[Eric 'Siggy' Scott](#) "Pleasure is an optional extra"

It's slightly more than "optional." It has "selective value," and is in line with nature. Therefore virtue requires us to pursue some natural pleasures. Anything that is natural for humans is something that we should seek out, for such things are "well chosen."

That's what differentiates Stoicism from Cynicism.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 10:05am](#) · [Edited](#)

[Jason Baker](#) or type unknown

[Jason Baker](#) [Eric 'Siggy' Scott](#), the standard of choosing is /anything/ that is natural for humans?

That's a can of worms.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [February 28 at 1:16pm](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Eric: there are loads of things that appear "natural", the blind pursuit of power for its own sake, gluttony, rape, theft, murder...The goal is to distinguish what it is wise to pursue or foolish. It is nice to have cake, or sex, or money, but it shouldn't become your life's goal, and you should be able to be content without such things. Happiness is self sufficient and does not depend on externals.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 2:13pm](#)

[Jason Baker](#)

[Jason Baker](#) I find the Epicurean categorization of desires to have far more utility in pursuing happiness wisely.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 2:26pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) I don't see a conflict; here is Cassius Gaius Longinus <<I hope that people will understand that for all, cruelty exists in proportion to hatred, and goodness and clemency in proportion to love, and evil men most seek out and crave the things which accrue to good men. It's hard to persuade people that 'the good is desirable for its own sake'; but it's both true and creditable that pleasure and tranquility are obtained by virtue, justice, and the good. Epicurus himself, from whom all your Catii and Amafinii take their leave as poor interpreters of his words, says 'there is no living pleasantly without living a good and just life.'>>

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 2:37pm](#)

Eric 'Siggy' Scott

[Eric 'Siggy' Scott](#) Jason: " the standard of choosing is /anything/ that is natural for humans?"

Haha, it sure would be, if the discussion stopped there. The Stoics had as much to say about what they meant (and did not mean) by "natural" as the Epicureans did, however.

Jimmy: 'there are loads of things that appear "natural"'

Indeed there are. But we're talking specifically about the Stoic view of ethics. Clearly they considered "gluttony, rape," etc, to be well outside the bounds of what is healthy or "natural" for humans.

"Happiness is self sufficient and does not depend on externals."

Of course. That's the definition of the Stoic position!

But virtue **does** require us to choose to manipulate externals in certain ways. That's why the Stoics were so critical of Aristo and the Cynics.

For instance, Seneca and Epictetus both admonish us to keep our bodies clean. To choose otherwise would be unnatural, and therefore vicious.

Of course, whether our bodies are clean is outside our sphere of control. But the **choice** to make an attempt to be clean is within our power. Being clean thus has "selective value," or is "to be promoted."

My point is that "optional" isn't quite the right word to describe the Stoic view of preferred externals.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 4:02pm](#) · [Edited](#)

Jason Baker

Jason Baker Well since we're talking about pleasure and not sanitation, let's quote-mine the stacks.

From Plutarch: "For example, Epicurus says that pleasure is good, whereas Antisthenes who said "I'd rather go mad than feel pleasure" thinks it is bad. And the Stoics say that pleasure is indifferent and not preferred, but Cleanthes held that it is not natural and does not have value in life, but, like a makeup brush, it is not natural. Archedemus says that it is natural in the way that armpit hairs are natural but does not have value; and Panaetius says that one kind of pleasure is natural and another kind is unnatural."

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 4:33pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

Jimmy Daltrey Jason, indifferents can be preferred (ice cream) or unpreferred (sweaty bum). In either case neither has direct bearing on one's ability to make wise or foolish choices, which are good and bad respectively.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 4:41pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

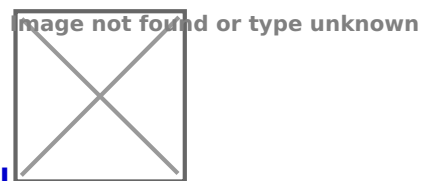
Write a reply...

Cassius Amicus

Cassius Amicus My list of quotes of the Stoics on Pleasure - Here's just a single one from Epictetus. Yes the main distinction is that the Stoics insist that virtue is the

goal and not pleasure, but I'd submit that it is impossible to read what the Stoics wrote and conclude as a practical matter that pleasure should not be avoided, and not something a wise man would allow himself to experience when there is a way around it:

“When you receive an impression of some pleasure, as with others, watch yourself, not to be carried off by it; however let it wait upon your business, and get some delay for yourself. Next remember both the times, when you will enjoy the pleasure, and when having enjoyed it later you will repent and reproach yourself; and against these refraining how much you will be glad and commend yourself. But if an opportunity appears to you to engage in the action, be sure you are not overcome by its softness and pleasure and attraction; but set against it, how much better is the awareness for yourself to have won a victory over it.” Epictetus, Enchiridion



<https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3...5sMUSUGROkd0y3l>

The Stoics On Pleasure

(Note: See also this Epicurean v Stoic comparison chart.) The following is a list of quotations from (or...

NEWEPICUREAN.COM

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [Remove Preview](#) · [2](#) · [February 27 at 5:53pm](#)

[Hide 51 Replies](#)

Alexander Rios Image not found or type unknown

Alexander Rios Wow!

Image not found or type unknown 1f603.png 😄 Image not found or type unknown

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [February 27 at 6:53pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

Jimmy Daltrey I think anger, complaining and fear get worse press. Are they talking

about physical or mental pleasures? Is this blind lust or chocolate chip cookies? It's hard to judge without the context. They clearly appear to be saying that pleasure isn't necessary to live a good life, but that must depend on how you see good. Is someone who sacrifices their own pleasures to look after a sick parent leading a good or a bad life? Who is the better person a political prisoner in North Korea or Kim Jong Un? I don't see the point of sacrificing pleasure unless for a greater good.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 27 at 7:34pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) If you have no greater good, pleasure seems logical, but people join the army to probably get killed. Tricky...

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 27 at 7:36pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Why resist a tyrant? It would have been easier to collaborate with Hitler or Stalin but people didn't. I'm thinking of the French resistance, Greek too thinking about it.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 27 at 7:40pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Are the Stoics more military minded than the Epicureans? Duty, virtue, eschewing pleasure? What would an Epicurean do if invaded? Fight or take to the hills?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 27 at 7:51pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) None of this is "tricky" at all. If someone wants to live pleurably that means doing what it takes to achieve that, and that means considering all of the mental and physical ramifications of all choices and acting on that calculation. Sure the calculation can get complicated, but the general principle of the calculation that pleasurable living is the goal is very simple. And Epicurus was very clear that fighting or ANY response to protect oneself is proper - it is only stoics/idealists who insist that there is an absolute list of dos and donts

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 7:34am](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Are you confusing virtue ethics with deontology? The Stoics have "be wise" and that is it. What is wise in one set of circumstances may be foolish in another so constant understanding. and calculation is required. The notion of

commandments and moral absolutes would be alien to the philosophies of the period. Those would be more legal concerns imposed by the State.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 11:33am](#) · [Edited](#)

Jason Baker

[Jason Baker](#) Virtue ethics and deontology are often cast as being in opposition to one another, but they both are predicated on the premise of "performing" according to some standard. One must measure oneself against that standard in order to determine if one is "acting" according to nature.

I'm not an actor in anyone's play.  

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [February 28 at 12:12pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) I'm confused now. Epicurus had exactly the same set of virtues, but they are a means to happiness rather than an end in themselves. So an Epicurean and a Stoic would act similarly in a given situation, both relying on wisdom, courage, prudence, moderation to guide their judgement. Surely?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 1:58pm](#)

Jason Baker

[Jason Baker](#) [Jimmy Daltrey](#) Given a comparison of the extant literature and the lives of the various proponents of the two schools as examples, I'm confident in concluding that this is not the case. I'm not certain how similarities can be drawn at all. This tendency of MoStos to smooth over the differences, when ancient stoics not only couldn't but refused to reconcile the two, appears to me to be mere eclecticism.

We're treading on Scottish ground, but can a cafeteria Christian be considered a real Christian if they don't have fellowship or doctrine? I don't see why the same sort of criticism can't be applied elsewhere. What point is there to have different words for things if the meanings attached to them don't matter?

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [February 28 at 2:51pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) I posted this on the other thread; Cassius Gaius Longinus; I hope that people will understand that for all, cruelty exists in proportion to hatred, and goodness and clemency in proportion to love, and evil men most seek out and crave the things which a...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 2:54pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or willful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of revelry, not sexual lust, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul. Of all this the beginning and the greatest good is wisdom. Therefore wisdom is a more precious thing even than philosophy ; from it spring all the other virtues, for it teaches that we cannot live pleasantly without living wisely, honorably, and justly; nor live wisely, honorably, and justly without living pleasantly. For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them." Letter to Menoecus"

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [February 28 at 3:07pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) "Living for virtue" is a totally empty definition because there is no reliable way to determine whether an action is "virtuous" or not without examining the goal of the action, and there is no way to validate that goal personally - the goal is all a ma...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 1 at 6:53pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) "Of all this the beginning and the greatest good is wisdom"

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 1 at 8:46pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Pleasures of the mind are greater than the pleasures of the flesh and what greater pleasure of the mind than wisdom?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 1 at 8:51pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) "If then we observe that ignorance and error reduce the whole of life to confusion, while Wisdom alone is able to protect us from the onslaughts of appetite and the menaces of fear, teaching us to bear even the affronts of fortune

with moderation, and showing us all the paths that lead to calmness and to peace, why should we hesitate to avow that Wisdom is to be desired for the sake of the pleasure it brings, and Folly to be avoided because of its injurious consequences?"

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [3](#) · [March 1 at 9:14pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Exactly

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 4:55am](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Exactly? "Wisdom" is not a pleasure in itself. Wisdom is desirable only because it BRINGS pleasure.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 4:58am](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) The distinction is fine, Wisdom is essential for pleasure " For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them" it's symbiotic.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 5:16am](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) I'm trying to think of a mental pleasure that would not fall under the rubric of "wisdom" or in fact a physical pleasure which is not enjoyed wisely.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 5:51am](#) · [Edited](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul. Of all this the beginning and the greatest good is wisdom. Therefore wisdom is a more precious thing even than philosophy ; from it spring all the other virtues, for it teaches that we cannot live pleasantly without living wisely, honorably, and justly; nor live wisely, honorably, and justly without living pleasantly. For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them."

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 5:52am](#)

[Elli Pensa](#) Image not found or type unknown

[Elli Pensa](#) Wisdom for the sake of wisdom is not an epicurean issue. Because Epicurus does not speak in his letter to Menoecus for wisdom as a universal thing

that is leading you to a leader, or a savior or a god. Epicurus speaks for personal PRUDENCE and the sober calculation and this is an achievement OF A PERSON who measures among pleasure and pain prudently and wisely. And prudence comes after the exercising and the personal experiences of the person, of where are his/hers personal limits of what is pleasurable, what is painful , what is beneficial and what is not beneficial.

Senses, anticipations and emotions of pleasure and pain are the criteria of truth of the Epicurean Canon and usually is used by prudent persons.

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 7:44am](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Who is talking of leaders or saviors or gods? We are talking about exercising one's will, making practical real world judgements in the light of experience. Did a Christian come in somewhere?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 9:51am](#) · [Edited](#)

Jason Baker

[Jason Baker](#) Jimmy, it seems to be a pattern where you take an aside as a direct challenge to you. Be aware that in rejecting Socratic dialogue, Epicureans illuminate their discourse with multiple explanations in order to make their meaning clear. Many paths to the...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 10:01am](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) I don't mean to be objectionable, I was just confused as to an apparent switch to a discussion on salvation and presumably a personal god. I do overthink things I admit.  [Life of a philosopher?](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [March 2 at 10:06am](#)

Jason Baker

[Jason Baker](#) [Elli](#) was pointing to the Canon, the criteria of truth in order that you might understand why wisdom isn't the telos. Using the criteria wisely leads you to the telos. We practice prudence because it is the surest way to have the confident expectation of future continuing pleasures. There's no other reason to be wise than to enjoy a life chock full of pleasures!

An insensible eternity awaits the atoms that make up our consciousness. Use them wisely, in order that you might not suffer unnecessarily in the short time you have!

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [March 2 at 10:19am](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) [Jimmy Daltrey](#) The distinction is "Fine"????? The distinction between a goal and and means is as big as a difference between a house and a hammer.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 11:10am](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Jimmy I am presuming you are sincere in claiming that the distinction between wisdom and pleasure is "fine." I think we are also clearly stating that the difference between a goal and a means is huge, because a goal tells you where you want to go, and a means tells you nothing about that or how you are going to use it. So I ask this curiously and without sarcasm - what is it about that distinction that you find to be unclear or invalid? You certainly are not the only one who argues about this.....

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 11:14am](#) · [Edited](#)

Elli Pensa

[Elli Pensa](#) [Jason Baker](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [March 2 at 11:14am](#)

Elli Pensa

[Elli Pensa](#) Jimmy Daltrey Wisdom for the sake of wisdom IS SIMILAR to that "Logos" and all these are leading to IDEALISM that is synonym with Religion.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [March 2 at 11:20am](#) · [Edited](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) All I am saying is the difference is academic, or irrelevant in practical terms. If a wise person is happy, does it really matter if they are happy because they sought happiness or because they sought wisdom? We are agreed that wisdom is necessary for...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 11:51am](#) · [Edited](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Thinking about it, Wisdom is prudent choice resulting in action, whereas pleasure is a passive internal state, so wisdom is more "real".


[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 11:54am](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

Jimmy Daltrey It is a very fine distinction...If i make only prudent decisions and undertake wise actions, how am in going to end up unhappy? Well at least less happy than if I took rash decisions and behaved foolishly?

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 12:09pm](#) · [Edited](#)

Elli Pensa

Elli Pensa Yes, wisdom is a so "real" thing. You feel it in your body when you're eating, drinking, sleeping, having sex etc **Jimmy Daltrey** you gave me an idea, when I am in the same room with my companion in life and sharing something with him, I will tell him : Let's eat the dish of wisdom or let's make a wisdom. Do you feel the wisdom ? HA HA 1f603.png 

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [March 2 at 12:08pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

Jimmy Daltrey Of all this the beginning and the greatest good is wisdom. Therefore wisdom is a more precious thing even than philosophy ; from it spring all the other virtues, for it teaches that we cannot live pleasantly without living wisely, honorably, and justly; nor live wisely, honorably, and justly without living pleasantly.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 12:14pm](#)

Jason Baker

Jason Baker Jimmy Daltrey

You'll note, upon reading the whole Epicurean canon (as opposed to the Canon, which you should familiarize yourself with too) that greatest good is used on several occasions in reference to different things. This could be down to bad translation or context that we're missing.

The important thing to remember is that a lot of what Epicurus taught was in direct opposition to Platonism. Plato's greatest good was the Logos, something you couldn't achieve in life except obliquely through discourse and contemplation. Doesn't seem very wise to spend your life on something you can't experience directly.

[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 12:25pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

Jimmy Daltrey Jason Baker; Epicurus is clearly saying wisdom, (phronesis) is the

greatest (megiston) good (agathon).

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 1:41pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Logos as divine wisdom is a lot later than Plato. First century AD, Philo, made famous by St John. It's a spiritual thing.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 1:43pm](#) · [Edited](#)

Elli Pensa

[Elli Pensa](#) Jimmy Daltrey But he also said that "I do not think I could conceive of the good without the pleasures of taste, of sex, of hearing, and without the pleasing motions caused by the sight of bodies and forms" (fg. 67) .

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [March 2 at 1:46pm](#) · [Edited](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Nobody said it was unwise to enjoy yourself. However:we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or willful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of revelry, not sexual lust, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 1:46pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) "Epicurus is clearly saying wisdom, (phronesis) is the greatest (megiston) good (agathon)." <<< Oh No No No!!! - the greatest TOOL is wisdom, but the REASON FOR wisdom is PLEASURE - "And for this cause we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good."

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 1:56pm](#)

Elli Pensa

[Elli Pensa](#) Doctrine 10. If those things which debauched men consider pleasurable in fact put an end to the fears of the mind, and of the heavens, and of death, and of

pain; and if those same pleasures taught us the natural limits of our desires, we would have no reason to blame those who devote themselves to such pursuits.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 2:00pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Jimmy I am continuing to proceed in this conversation as to whether virtue is means or an end in itself on the presumption that you are here sincerely and not trolling. "Virtue is its own reward" is indeed what I was taught myself when I was young, an...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 2:00pm](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) **[Cassius Amicus](#)**: I'll back off if I'm annoying people. "Virtue is its own reward" is a Christian thing including faith, hope and charity (agape). Not at all Hellenic and a lot later. Anyway, we can close the subject.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 2:19pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) And the question of this distinction is of HUGE significance for this reason: We all individually have faculties of pain and pleasure which allow us to judge in our own cases what we find to be in our interest to live most pleasurably. But while we a...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 2:20pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Jimmy I think you realize that we have problems here with people trolling. As long as you are sincere and courteous and respectful, and the others are to you, then as far as I am concerned this conversation can go on endlessly, because the truth is it...[See More](#)

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 2:22pm](#) · [Edited](#)

Jimmy Daltrey

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) Fair enough Cassius. I do get the impression I have walked into the middle of an ongoing row you have been having with Christians and Stoic trolls (which is deeply ironic) which must be annoying for you.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 2:36pm](#)

Elli Pensa

[Elli Pensa](#) The stoics are never trolling when they support and defend their

philosophy. Nature is trolling with them. HA 1f603.png



[Unlike](#) · [Reply](#) · [2](#) · [March 2 at 2:47pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Well it can be annoying, Jimmy, but the core division issue is so interesting and so important that as new people come and go it will always be something that people bring up. A different aspect of the issue is that we don't want to always be in gladiator mode - for those who come here who are grounded in that issue, there are many more things to talk about that are equally or more interesting. There are a couple of lightning rod issues like this one that come up over and over, but we need to make sure that our posters keep a balance and that we generate content that appeals to our different segments.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [1](#) · [March 2 at 7:24pm](#)

Cassius Amicus

[Cassius Amicus](#) Jimmy we are very respectful of peoples' privacy and as long as the discussion is productive it doesn't matter where it comes from, but is there anything you can tell us about yourself that would help others key into your perspective? Are you a teacher/professor? A non-academic like a lot of us? General age and or info about what brings you here? If you can address any of that it might assist the conversations.

[Like](#) · [Reply](#) · [March 2 at 7:27pm](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#)

[Jimmy Daltrey](#) *I'm in the UK, in my fifties, just an interested amateur. Gave up being interested in politics because of the liars on all sides. Still learning* 1f600.png *or type unknown*