

# All Pleasure Is Desirable, Because It Is Pleasing To Us, But Is All Pleasure \*Equally\* Desirable?

Post by "Pivot" of May 8, 2018 at 2:22 AM

I focus on pain because of Epicurus' idea that maximum pleasure is freedom from pain. He has stated "For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear, and, when once we have attained all this, the tempest of the soul is laid[...]" I would agree with you that pleasures are very subjective, so a universal ranking would be inappropriate. You bring up an interesting point in the man toiling five years for five minutes on the mountaintop.

The five minutes is likely in the "natural but unnecessary for happiness" category. Didn't Epicurus also believe that we should not seek that which is unnecessary for happiness, but we should enjoy them if they were to come to us? I would differentiate this from toiling for family, friends, or a fulfilling career, because these things may very well be necessary for happiness for some. There is also an interpretation of the "natural/unnatural and necessary/unnecessary" categories, which bases them on survival instead of on happiness, but both are valid (which Epicurus recognizes in his letter to Menoeceus). The man toiling for five years for this brief pleasure of the mountaintop is lacking a tranquility of mind for these five years in doing so. A desire which would result in five years of the lack of ἀταραξία seems to be one that Epicurus would second-guess.

If the goal for Epicurus is pleasure, and if "pleasure reaches its maximum limit at the removal of all sources of pain," is the goal not then complete freedom from pain?

To remove all sources of pain means to be left only with pleasure if our lives have any substance whatsoever. I think even the most unfortunate of lives do not consist of solely pain. So the removal of all sources of pain would result in the baseline of pleasure, which death would not fulfill. There is also intrinsic pleasure in being free from pain. If I may quote Lucretius:

"Sweet it is, when the wind whips the water on the great sea,  
to gaze from the land upon the great struggles of another,  
not because it is a delightful pleasure for anyone to be distressed,  
but because it is sweet to observe those evils which you lack yourself."

This is the sort of pleasure which death or sleep could not provide.

I erred if I tried to argue that freedom from pain in the absence of any pleasure whatsoever is desirable. But I do think freedom from pain always results in pleasure in any practical sense.

Let me know what you think about this, I always appreciate the different perspective.

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/428-all-pleasure-is-desirable-because-it-is-pleasing-to-us-but-is-all-pleasure-equal/?postID=1099#post1099>