

# Episode 217 - Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 24 - Does Luck Control Whether An Epicurean Is Happy?

Post by "Cassius" of March 2, 2024 at 12:25 PM

This comment is relevant to many discussions, and I hate to think of how many instances of this quote need to be changed on this forum. I have changed some of the most important and most recent, but if anyone sees this somewhere and wants to drop me a line to correct it please do.

I thank [Bryan](#) for point this correction out to me, as I think it goes to a central point where the some editions of "On Ends," can be misleading.

The issue is the underlined part of this exchange between Cicero and Torquatus at Book 2, section 11 (Torquatus speaking first):

"'Can then,' my friend said, 'anything be sweeter than to feel no pain?' 'Nay, I said, 'be it granted that there is nothing better, for I am not yet investigating that question; does it therefore follow that painlessness, so to call it, is identical with pleasure?' 'It is quite identical, and is the greatest possible, and no pleasure can be greater.'"

The Latin in the key phrase is "Plane idem, inquit, et maxima quidem, qua fieri nulla maior potest."(Cic. Fin. 2.11) which Bryan translates the same as Reid: "Clearly the same, he says, and indeed the greatest, beyond which none greater can possibly be."

However the better-known translation is Rackham, which I have used more frequently myself, and here it is [at Lacus Curtius](#):

"Well," he asked, "can anything be more pleasant than freedom from pain?" "Still," I replied, "granting there is nothing better (that point I waive for the moment), surely it does not therefore follow that what I may call the negation of pain is the same thing as pleasure?" "Absolutely the same," said he, "indeed the negation of pain is a very intense pleasure, the most intense pleasure possible."

I think that Rackham version is very misleading in using the word "intense," as "intensity is one of the three variables that Epicurus refers to in PDO9 (along with duration and part of the body affected). But what is being discussed here is what is the "Greatest" pleasure, more in the context of the "limit" of pleasure or the "measurement of pleasure" as we have been discussing. It is not a question of "intensity" and more than it is a question of "duration" or "part of the body involved."

Epicurus never said that you reached the "greatest pleasure" by dialing up the "intensity" knob to 100%, or dialing up the "duration" knob to 100%, or dialing up the "part of the body" to 100%. How you dial those three knobs is going to be a matter of personal preference within the

context of your personal circumstances.

So if we are going to keep in mind a distinction between the "greatest pleasure" as against "the most intense pleasure," this Book 2:11 quote needs to be as Reid has translated it, rather than Rackham.

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I am going to look for the Yonge translation and add it here for comparison when I have time. In the meantime thank you Bryan!

[Here is Yonge:](#) IV. Is it possible, said he, for anything to be more delightful than freedom from pain? Well, said I, but grant that nothing is preferable to that, (for that is not the point which I am inquiring about at present,) does it follow on that account, that pleasure is identical with what I may call painlessness ? Undoubtedly it is identical with it, said he ; and that painlessness is the greatest of pleasures which no other can possibly exceed.

Preliminary Conclusion: The problem is with Rackham, the most current and most wide-used of versions.