

Illustrations and Analogies For Explaining the "Two And Only Two Feelings" Argument

Post by "Cassius" of May 21, 2026 at 3:02 PM

This is parallel to the same problem in discussing discrete experiences. Saying that you are experiencing "pleasure" tells you absolutely nothing about what you are doing other than that you find it agreeable. Epicurus certainly understood that. Real people experience real experiences of innumerable kinds and they "feel" it to be agreeable - none of us are really interested in pursuing "pleasure" except in the abstract view of the term. The abstract view is critically important for communicating to others and understanding ourselves, but from the very first time we ever say that the goal is "pleasure" it needs to be understood that that statement is an abstraction, and what we really mean is that we pursuing any of a numberless set of activities that may have nothing whatsoever in common with each other beyond that we find them agreeable.

We have to be able to separate the idea of "pleasure as an abstraction of the goal" and "pleasure as a particular experience/feeling" and be able to flip effortlessly between the two contexts without confusing ourselves or others.