

Opening Discussion of Kelly Arenson's "Health And Happiness In Plato And Epicurus"

Post by "Cassius" of July 31, 2026 at 12:25 PM

I have spent the morning listening to the first two chapters of the Arenson book, which is focused on what is said about Pleasure in the Republic and [Philebus](#).

The whole structure of holding being to be better than becoming and the need to discuss "limits" is deeply disturbing to me in listening to this.

So much of this discussion of being vs becoming and limited vs unlimited is just unadulterated trash - it is very similar to religious discussion of angels dancing on pinheads.

This is likely to radicalize me further: Thomas Jefferson was far too lenient in his conclusions about Plato and other Greeks like the Stoics. These word games are as deceptive and manipulative as any religion ever invented.

Epicurus was right to point out their logical fallacies, but lingering too long in disputing them plays into their hands by distracting from a common sense understanding of pleasure and pain.

Probably the smartest this Torquatus said was at the beginning when he said that Epicurus refused to admit any need for argument or discussion to prove that pleasure is desirable and pain is to be avoided.

I am beginning to see this as very close to the argument as go religion. Yes it is good to point out that the religious view of the nature of divinity is flawed, but it makes no sense to spend your life debating priests about the supernatural.

And yes it makes sense to point out that the logic of the anti-pleasure arguments is wrong, but it makes no sense to argue forever about logical definitions of how to slice and dice pleasure into logical but meaningless categories.

It's as big a mistake to speculate endlessly about categories of pleasures as it is to speculate whether gods speak Greek or Latin.

If our goal is to better the lives of real people rather than pinheads, it's far better to stick to basic points and then work to apply them in real life, not just debate about words and definitions.

To clarify - this is an excellent book for those who want to understand how we got to where we are. Unfortunately those who need it most are probably the least likely to read it.