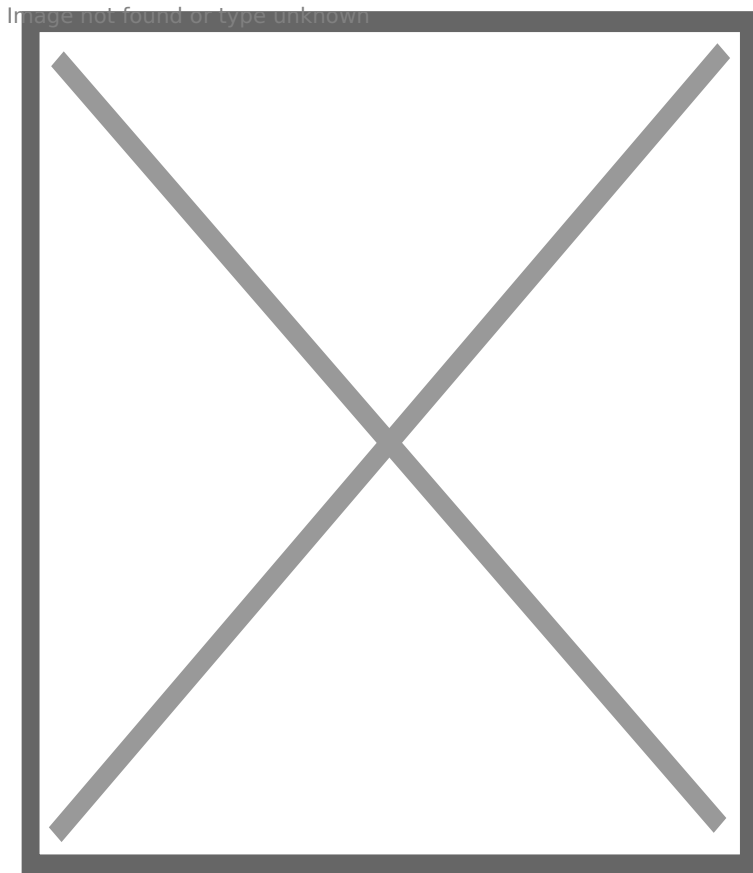


# Discussion of New Substack Article: "A Gate To Be Burst: Absence of Pain"

Post by "Cassius" of February 11, 2024 at 5:57 PM

For quite a while I have wanted to explore the use of Substack, so I have opened a new account and written a longer-form article as my first post there. I have also posted the same article here, as this forum will always remain the primary place where I think we can make progress on understanding the philosophy of Epicurus.

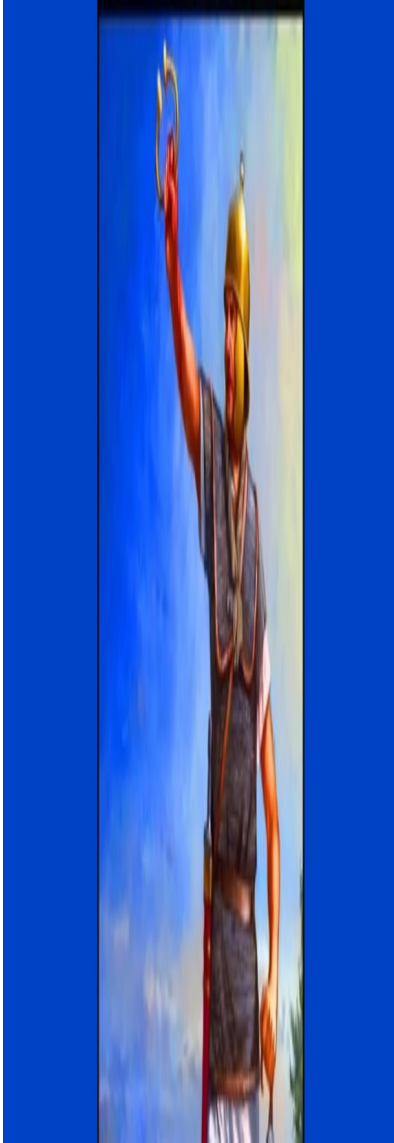
For those of you using substack, the address of the new article is here:



[A Gate To Be Burst: "Absence of Pain"](#)

It is interesting to think about what Lucretius had in mind in Book One of "On The Nature of Things" when he spoke about Epicurus "yearning to be the first to...  
epicureanfriends.substack.com

For those who would like to access it here, the link is:



Blog Article

### **[A Gate To Be Burst: "Absence of Pain"](#)**

It is interesting to think about what Lucretius had in mind in Book One of *"On The Nature of Things"* when he spoke about Epicurus *"yearning to be the first to burst through the close-set bolts upon the gates of nature."* What kind of gates was he talking about? Who bolted them? How do those gates keep us from Nature?

I can't be sure which gates Lucretius had in mind, but I can suggest one "gate" that is particularly in need of bursting, as it stands directly in the way of a better understanding...



<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3710-discussion-of-new-substack-article-a-gate-to-be-burst-absence-of-pain/>

Cassius

February 11, 2024 at 6:20 AM

It's rather lengthy and though I have revised it several times already, it certainly could be improved. However I think it's ready to add to our efforts outside this forum, so it's going up now.

Thanks for reading!

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### **Post by “Don” of February 11, 2024 at 6:42 PM**

Subscribed. 👍

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 11, 2024 at 6:50 PM**

Oh I should be very clear! It is set to be a free account so there is no fee for the subscription required!

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### **Post by “Don” of February 11, 2024 at 7:59 PM**

#### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Oh I should be very clear! It is set to be a free account so there is no fee for the subscription required!

Oh! LOL! I wasn't going to pay for it. 😄 Now it's just in my feed on Substack! Looking forward to reading it.

PS... Would you consider "guest" articles in the future? Just asking for a friend 😊

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## **Post by “Cassius” of February 11, 2024 at 9:20 PM**

First, I am glad I posted this on Super Bowl night - hopefully only a few people read it before I went through and made some more edits.

Second, ABSOLUTELY I would consider some "guest" articles, both at Substack and here as a backup.

I am going to try to work on producing one substantive article at least every week or two, and the best way to do that is likely to comment on what we're discussing here at the forum.

I seem to remember you (Don) had a list of projects in the hopper and it would be great to get them on substack. I am thinking that the relationship that makes the most sense is that we will always continue the primary ongoing discussion here at the forum in "forum" format, but as we talk through subjects we develop them into summaries that look more like "articles" which we can feature here and there.

Both formats have their uses, and of course that's what my first substack article was - a sort of master summary of ideas we've been talking about for months as we have gone through "On Ends."

I would welcome anyone here who is regular enough to be a level 3 or above to consider tacking "article-length" projects that we can publish outside the forum. Many of our regular posts are good enough already, and we just need to curate them and "push" them outside into the world of substack and beyond.

Of course it's easy for anyone to post their own articles at substack, but hopefully we will end up with some number of subscribers who find the "Epicureanfriends" stack, and we can certainly post there anyone's Epicurean articles that fit the format.

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## **Post by “Don” of February 11, 2024 at 10:12 PM**

I still really want to break down my Menoikeus material into an actual "study guide" format with maybe less language-specific and more topical "lessons"... but that will, of course, include delving into the actual meanings of key words.

## Post by “Don” of February 12, 2024 at 7:14 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Of course it's easy for anyone to post their own articles at substack

Which brings up an interesting question: Should more of us be posting to substack to increase the epicurean content "outside our Garden"? Or should we use Cassius' new outlet to simply expand the outlet of voices?

Some Substackers post daily! That amazes me. Cassius committing to a regular bi-weekly level of content is daunting!! Cassius has been doing weekly podcast releases for years. His posting a lengthy Substack article biweekly deserves KYΔOΣ (kudos)! I barely get a quarterly newsletter out at work!!

I read the new article, too. KYΔOΣ for that as well! Very impressive and highly referenced with quotes. Well done!!

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## Post by “Cassius” of February 12, 2024 at 7:23 AM

My view is that all of us who are motivated to do so should pursue each and every outlet that we can, so yes i would encourage everyone to open their own substack and blog and twitter and other social media accounts and publish their own work. Creative production like that is the best way I have found to internalize the philosophy.

Realistically though, not everyone is going to be willing or able to do that. It's easy enough to post here in a friendly environment without a lot of friction, and that will probably always make the most sense for the most people. But just the same, some of us will have the time and motivation to work on occasional longer articles, and if we bundle them together through an Epicureanfriends substack (and maybe similar venues, as they arise) then they can get more exposure than they would otherwise.

I doubt that most postings on substack will be as long and involved one as this first one on absence of pain, so they don't have to be novels, just stand-alone substantive pieces that fit the theme of what we're doing here.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 12, 2024 at 8:36 AM

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3710-discussion-of-new-substack-article-a-gate-to-be-burst-absence-of-pain/>

### [Quote from Don](#)

Which brings up an interesting question: Should more of us be posting to substack to increase the epicurean content "outside our Garden"? Or should we use Cassius' new outlet to simply expand the outlet of voices?

I personally think every person should make their own substack. (I may create one, or may use another platform.) There must be a way to recommend other substack content, with a link.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2024 at 9:09 AM**

Elli's comment to the article at Facebook:

From Epicurus LTM we read (in parentheses are my comments to understand better what Epicurus meant):

"When, therefore, we maintain that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of profligates (i.e. the addicted) and those that consist in sensuality (the addicted in sensuality e.g. those that want to make sex with whatever is moving and walking HA ), as is supposed by some who are either ignorant or disagree with us or do not understand, but freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind. FOR IT IS NOT THE CONTINUOUS drinkings (alcoholism) and revelings (orgies), nor the satisfaction of lusts (porno videos etc), nor the enjoyment of fish and other luxuries of the wealthy table (a struggling to find the expensive and scarce things i.e. like the chian wine in the era of Philodemus) , (nor the cocaine, LSD and other drugs, nor the reading of books of stoicism ) are those things which produce a pleasant life, BUT SOBER REASONING, searching out the motives for all choice and avoidance, and banishing mere opinions, to which are due the greatest disturbance of the spirit".

In the above excerpt Epicurus used one greek word that it has to be pointed out, it is the: "συνεῖροντες" that in english is given with the word "CONTINUOUS".

But really, with the above excerpt of LTM what Epicurus has in mind and what Epicurus had experienced-lived, and who are those that Epicurus photographed as profligates?

Historical facts :

In the same era of Epicurus lived Demetrius called as Poliorcetes = "The Besieger" the son of Antigonus I Monophthalmus and Stratonice. He was a Macedonian Greek military leader, and finally king of Macedon (294–288 BC). He belonged to the Antigonid dynasty and was its first

member to rule Macedonia and Athens.

Demetrius the Besieger as the ancient Athenians told was he :

"Who abridged the whole year into a single month,"

and with reference to the quartering of the Parthenon:—

Who took the Acropolis for a caravansary,

And introduced to its virgin goddess (Athena) his courtesans."

Demetrius the Besieger was married five times:

- His first wife was Phila daughter of Regent Antipater by whom he had two children: Stratonice of Syria and Antigonus II Gonatas.

- His second wife was Eurydice of Athens, by whom he is said to have had a son called Corrhabus.

- His third wife was Deidamia, a sister of Pyrrhus of Epirus. Deidamia bore him a son called Alexander who is said by Plutarch to have spent his life in Egypt, probably in an honourable captivity.

- His fourth wife was Lanassa, the former wife of his brother-in-law Pyrrhus of Epirus.

- His fifth wife was Ptolemais, daughter of Ptolemy I Soter and Eurydice of Egypt, by whom he had a son called Demetrius the Fair.

- He also had an affair with a celebrated courtesan called Lamia of Athens, by whom he had a daughter called Phila. He demanded 250 talents from the Athenians, which he then gave to Lamia and other courtesans to buy soap and cosmetics.

From the Parallel Lives -The Life of Demetrius the Besieger, by Plutarch, we read :

<<So he (Demetrius) crossed the sea in safety with a great fleet, but as he was sailing along the coast of Attica he encountered a storm in which most of his ships were lost and a great number of men perished with them. He himself, however, escaped alive, and began a petty war against the Athenians. But since he could accomplish nothing, he sent men to collect another fleet for him, while he himself passed on into Peloponnesus and laid siege to Messene. Here, in an attack upon the walls, he came near losing his life; for a missile from a catapult struck him in the face and passed through his jaw into his mouth. But he recovered, and after restoring to their allegiance certain cities which had revolted from him, he invaded Attica again, got Eleusis and Rhamnus into his power, and ravaged the country. He also seized a ship laden with grain for Athens, and hung its supercargo and its master.

All other ships were thus frightened into turning back, and famine became acute in the city (of Athens), where, besides lack of food, there was dearth also of other things. At any rate, a bushel of salt sold there for forty drachmas, and a peck of wheat was worth three hundred. A slight respite was afforded the Athenians by the appearance off Aegina of a hundred and fifty ships which Ptolemy sent to assist them. Then numerous ships came to Demetrius from Peloponnesus, and many from Cyprus, so that his entire assemblage numbered three hundred, in consequence of which the ships of Ptolemy put off to sea in flight, and Lachares the tyrant abandoned the city and ran away.

Then the Athenians, although they had decreed death to anyone who should so much as mention peace and reconciliation with Demetrius, straightway threw open the nearest gates and sent ambassadors to him. They did not expect any kindly treatment from him, but were driven to the step by their destitution, in which, among many other grievous things, the following also is said to have occurred. A father and a son were sitting in a room and had abandoned all hope. Then a dead mouse fell from the ceiling, and the two, when they saw it, sprang up and fought with one another for it. □□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□, □□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□, □□□□□□ □□□□□□

As for Cicero... he was one of the most viciously and doggedly hunted among the proscribed. He was viewed with sympathy by a large segment of the public and many people refused to report that they had seen him. He was caught on 7 December 43 BC leaving his villa in Formiae in a litter heading to the seaside, where he hoped to embark on a ship destined for Macedonia.] When his killers - Herennius (a Centurion) and Popilius (a Tribune) - arrived, Cicero's own slaves said they had not seen him, but he was given away by Philologus, a freedman of his brother Quintus Cicero. Cicero about age 60, from a marble bust

As reported by Seneca the Elder, according to the historian Aufidius Bassus, Cicero's last words are said to have been:

Ego vero consisto. Accede, veterane, et, si hoc saltim potes recte facere, incide cervicem.

I go no further: approach, veteran soldier, and, if you can at least do so much properly, sever this neck.

He bowed to his captors, leaning his head out of the litter in a gladiatorial gesture to ease the task. By baring his neck and throat to the soldiers, he was indicating that he would not resist. According to Plutarch, Herennius first slew him, then cut off his head. On Antony's instructions his hands, which had penned the Philippics against Antony, were cut off as well; these were nailed along with his head on the Rostra in the Forum Romanum according to the tradition of Marius and Sulla, both of whom had displayed the heads of their enemies in the Forum. Cicero was the only victim of the proscriptions who was displayed in that manner. According to Cassius Dio, in a story often mistakenly attributed to Plutarch, Antony's wife Fulvia took Cicero's head, pulled out his tongue, and jabbed it repeatedly with her hairpin in final revenge against Cicero's



1. When Cicero uses Torquatus as the spokesman for Epicureans even though he (Torquatus) was a military man whose life was dictated by duty such that he was living life in a manner likely not recommended by Epicurus, does this in any way undermine or alter the reader's (of "On Ends") attitude toward Epicureans?

2. Some new ideas after reading this: "Absence of pain is *the* highest pleasure" is different than saying something like: "any pleasure without pain is the best kind of pleasure we can experience". And I now think it is possible that "absence of pain is the highest pleasure" is to be used as a remedy just like "[death is nothing to us](#)". It is a remedy for discontent, when you feel discontent even though you have everything you could possibly need: then you consider how absence of pain is the highest pleasure.

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## Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2024 at 9:49 AM

Both of these last comments by Kalosyni show to me how much there is to think through on these questions:

1 - \*We\* might consider that Cicero's choice of Torquatus as spokesman undermines Epicurus, but I would say that would mainly come from the preexisting mindset that we have, based on years of commentators drumming on "absence of pain" without explaining it the way Torquatus did. In the modern world they have created a drumbeat that Epicurus must have been a neoBuddhist, and anyone who says so is wrong -- even if the person who says so was taught by Epicurean teachers, had many Epicurean friends, was writing to a significantly Epicurean audience, and had a greater command of the source materials of Greek philosophy than we today will ever hope to have. Cicero likely felt just the opposite - that by using Torquatus as spokesman he was granting to Epicurean philosophy a vigor that he did not think that it had. These attitudes are a problem that can't be worked through overnight, and getting to the appreciation of how much Cicero knew in relation to how much we know takes a strong dose of humility.

2 - Many of these phrases have multiple meanings from multiple perspectives. What is stated here in (2) could be one of them, especially if you're stuck in a rut from failing to have properly understood and implemented Epicurean philosophy in the past. But if you've failed to the point where you are at such a point of desperation, you probably better question whether your latest insight is any better than the failed insights that got you where you are. Sometimes when you have dug yourself into a ditch of asceticism, the first thing to do might be to stop digging rather than seek justification for what you've already dug!

## Post by “Cassius” of February 12, 2024 at 10:02 AM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Some new ideas after reading this: "Absence of pain is the highest pleasure" is different than saying something like: "any pleasure without pain is the best kind of pleasure we can experience".

This is another point. I don't think it makes any sense given the rest of Epicurean physics and epistemology to conclude that when Epicurus spoke of "the highest pleasure" he was speaking of a single particular experience such as sex, or eating, or anything else that is a specific activity. Sex with whom? Eating what? Listening to what kind of music? Who other than ourselves is to say that listening to Bach is more pleasant to us than listening to Beethoven?

Epicurus talks about the man at the banquet choosing food that is "the most pleasant" rather than the greatest quantity. I think we can apply that reasoning to the entire subject. When we speak of pleasure we speak of agreeableness, but exactly what kind of agreeableness is going to be personal to the individual living thing that is experiencing it. There are no Platonic ideals in any other aspect of life, and I don't think there is a Platonic ideal of "the highest pleasure" that fits everyone exactly the same way. Pleasure is ultimately a feeling and feelings aren't abstractions that can be stated in a precise mathematical or verbal formula. To employ one of the phrases we posted about recently: All models are 'wrong,' in that they are not the exact equivalent of the reality that they seek to describe, but some models (like "absence of pain") are useful, in that they help us understand how to target a goal.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 12, 2024 at 11:58 AM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

When we speak of pleasure we speak of agreeableness, but exactly what kind of agreeableness is going to be personal to the individual living thing that is experiencing it. There are no Platonic ideals in any other aspect of life, and I don't think there is a Platonic ideal of "the highest pleasure" that fits everyone exactly the same way. Pleasure is ultimately a feeling and feelings aren't abstractions that can be stated in a precise mathematical or verbal formula. To employ one of the phrases we posted about recently: All models are 'wrong,' in that they are not the exact equivalent of the reality that they seek to describe, but some models (like "absence of pain") are useful, in that

they help us understand how to target a goal.

Here is a possible example of a situation:

Let's say a person goes to the grocery store to buy some eggs (healthy and easy to make) and also sees a nice looking big bag of Easter candy chocolate eggs, and brings that home too. After eating a nice omelet for dinner he feels satisfied, but an hour later he then opens the bag of chocolate eggs and eats them even though he is not hungry. He enjoys them because the sweet taste is very enjoyable as he is eating them. In fact he often buys candy or chocolate and feels compelled and driven to eat it whenever there is a dull or boring moment, such that he has developed "a sweet tooth habit" and is also over-weight and is pre-diabetic. Even when he is not hungry he thinks of chocolate (a feeling of restlessness comes up). When the bag of candy is in the house it is almost impossible to not eat it and it doesn't last very long before it is all gone.

I would like to propose that by thinking through the idea that "the highest pleasure is the absence of pain" will provide some insight into the sense of discontent that is at play in this situation and provide an opportunity to develop contentment rather than be driven by compulsion. And the factor that most determines the outcome is to not buy the candy at the store. So this is an example of using this idea as a therapeutic tool.

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## Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2024 at 12:13 PM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I would like to propose that by thinking through the idea that "the highest pleasure is the absence of pain" will provide some insight into the sense of discontent that is at play in this situation and provide an opportunity to develop contentment rather than be driven by compulsion.

If that works for you I would say more power to you.

As for me, I see hypotheticals like that, no matter how intricate they are made, as all boiling down to questions that are solved by looking to [VS71](#) and following this guidance: *"Every desire must be confronted by this question: What will happen to me if the object of my desire is accomplished, and what if it is not?"*

As far as "absence of pain" goes, for me that's mainly a statement that expands the definition of pleasure and tells me that the best I can hope for in life is as much pleasure accompanied by

as little pain as possible. The pleasure that comes from eating chocolate is not necessarily more or less pleasurable than the extra time I might have laying in bed staring at the ceiling at the nursing home if I keep my blood sugar under control for a longer period. That may be an extreme example but to state it more neutrally, the pleasure of health that comes from eating low-carb/keto is not necessarily greater than the pleasure that comes from eating a more sugary diet.

Posing stark examples helps make the questions more clear. Is it necessarily so that living a longer number of years (which might occur if you eat a lean and hungry diety) always and for everyone better than living a shorter life while eating the "standard American diet"? Yes it's better in terms of the physical health of the body, if that is your \*only\* measure of "better," but I don't think anyone can persuasively maintain that Epicurus would say (or we should think) that the "health of the body" is the only thing in play. Would or should \*everyone\* choose to eat a "cave-man" diet in order to live a longer number of days?

I always turn back to the letter to Menoecus for what I think is most persuasive on that point:

*[126] But the many at one moment shun death as the greatest of evils, at another (yearn for it) as a respite from the (evils) in life. (But the wise man neither seeks to escape life) nor fears the cessation of life, for neither does life offend him nor does the absence of life seem to be any evil. And just as with food he does not seek simply the larger share and nothing else, but rather the most pleasant, so he seeks to enjoy not the longest period of time, but the most pleasant.*

So yes I think that "absence of pain" is they key to a proper understanding of the full nature of pleasure, so that we understand that sensory stimulation is not all that we live for. But the expanded definition of pleasure still does not tell anyone which particular pleasures to pursue in life, so we have to decide what is our own best mix of mental and bodily experiences, based on what we find to be "most pleasant." And I don't think there is a universal right and wrong answer to the question of "what" is most pleasant, as that is something each person feels uniquely for himself.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 12, 2024 at 12:51 PM

### [Quote from Cassius](#)

Yes it's better in terms of the physical health of the body, if that is your \*only\* measure of "better," but I don't think anyone can persuasively maintain that Epicurus would say

(or we should think) that the "health of the body" is the only thing in play. Would or should \*everyone\* choose to eat a "cave-man" diet in order to live a longer number of days?

I am not proposing a special diet, nor am I thinking about living a long and healthy life, but I am instead thinking about the mental experience of immediate time. Some people may be able to keep sweets in the house without feeling compelled to eat them quickly and without feeling restless (constantly thinking about eating more sweets). And some people may not be using candy in this manner to alleviate boredom (creating a feedback loop of restlessness and agitation). It is a subjective and individual situation, so not something that is applied straight across the board - everyone needs to decide for themselves regarding "the absence of pain is the highest pleasure".

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### Post by “Kalosyni” of February 12, 2024 at 3:10 PM

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

It is a subjective and individual situation, so not something that is applied straight across the board - everyone needs to decide for themselves regarding "the absence of pain is the highest pleasure".

Thinking further on this...that on the opposite side of this idea is that this is too high of a bar to reach. If a person is looking to feel pleasure which is absent from pain, then they will be thinking with a mind-set which is looking to root out pain. This can quickly become depressing (and difficult to do). **It may end up being better to think about choosing "pleasures with less pain"** than "pleasures without any pain"...and choosing pleasures which crowd out the pain (and lead to health of the body and happiness of the soul).

It's important to remember that only the gods experience perfect pleasures.

Also, that means when I decide to stop buying candy, I need to choose something else pleasurable to do instead 😊

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### Post by “Bryan” of February 12, 2024 at 5:04 PM

I know I'm on the younger side, but the areas of active pain in my body have been limited to specific places and to specific times. Most of the time, most parts of my body are not feeling pain (even if my elbow hurts all the time). By my interpretation of Epicurus and experience, this is the natural limit, which cannot be passed. The "active" pleasures are relief from the pain of want.

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## Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2024 at 5:21 PM

[Bryan](#) your last comment is exactly what I just sat down to post about. Some people seem to have a problem with "absence of pain" because they refuse to separate out the parts of the body, which you just pointed out is important to consider. They want to say that "I" am in pain whenever their foot or their stomach hurts, as if there is some abstract "I" that is the sum of all the separate feelings from all the separate parts of the body and mind, and that they should ignore the entire rest of their mind and body that is not in pain.

While we do have a consciousness that can shift its awareness from one part of the body to another, or to multiple parts at once, when we are talking about pleasure and pain we are really talking about the parts of the mind or body that are involved, and we are considering the duration and intensity of those pleasures in the different locations.

We can have a headache, but our little finger at the same time is not in pain. Epicurus is telling us to think about the big picture but not to lose sight of the fact that you can do more than one thing at once. Just like Epicurus did at the end, you can offset the pleasures of thinking about pleasant things against the pains in other parts of the mind and body. You can't erase the pains from existence by doing so, and if they hurt bad enough then you're definitely going to feel it, but you can offset them against each other when evaluating your overall existence.

I would say that the point Epicurus seems to be getting at is that we are not some disembodied "unit" where we are either "in pleasure" or "in pain" as a unit. We are real living things with different parts of our minds and bodies, and just because our little finger is hurting that does not mean that our entire existence is controlled by that pain.

This comes to mind too because this is covered in why "absence of pain" is not a "fancy pleasure" (Elayne's term [in her article](#)). A peanut without salt is a peanut. Any specific pleasure without accompanying pain is still that same specific pleasure - not something new. When we stipulate that someone is experiencing life "without any pain," what we mean is that the person is experiencing life - the same combination of pleasurable experiences that existed before that last unit of pain was removed - not entering some kind of state of transcendental ecstasy or euphoria.

I think your bringing this up is extremely helpful both to the "Bursting the Gate" article and Elayne's "[Pleasure Pain and Happiness](#)" article. The Bursting the Gate article focuses more on what Epicurus/ Torquatus "were" saying, and the "Pleasure Pain and Happiness" which argues against "Fancy Pleasure" is focusing more on what Epicurus "was not" saying.

Both perspectives require this understanding that "absence of pain" doesn't mean the creation of some new type of experience. If I recall correctly, this is where Gosling and Taylor end up in their long article on katastematic pleasure in "The Greeks On Pleasure." There are definitely all sorts of mental and physical pleasures, but "absence of pain" does not constitute a pleasure of its own unique type. There are numberless types of pleasures and pains, but in the end we come back to the understanding that there are only **two** feelings, pleasure and pain, and "absence of pain" is just another term for "pleasure." Epicureans reason by analogy from their own experience to those things which have not yet been observed by them, they don't let loose of reality and all of a sudden then that getting to 0% pain transports us to another dimension (as implied by those who talk in low voices about "absence of pain" in a Buddhist-like sense).

Both "pleasure" and "absence of pain" can be used to describe the same numberless set of ordinary agreeable experiences with which we are all familiar, and neither describe any separate and special experience that is outside the term "pleasure" and available only to the gods, or available only to the person who hypothetically reaches a state of "total absence of pain." As I think we've discussed on the forum before, there's no reason at all to think that there is a major change in condition between the person who is experiencing 99.9% pleasure / .01% pain and the person who is experiencing 100% pleasure and 00% pain.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 12, 2024 at 5:22 PM

### [Quote from Bryan](#)

the areas of active pain in my body have been limited to specific places and to specific times. Most of the time, most parts of my body are not feeling pain (even if my elbow hurts all the time).

[Bryan](#) , What would happen if you said this about pleasure:

...the areas of active pleasure in my body have been limited to specific places and to specific times. Most of the time, most parts of my body are not feeling [stimulative] pleasure.

Thoughts?

## Post by “Cassius” of February 12, 2024 at 5:46 PM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

...the areas of active pleasure in my body have been limited to specific places and to specific times. Most of the time, most parts of my body are not feeling [stimulative] pleasure.

My response to that would be that your view of pleasure is incomplete. If you are alive and aware of anything at all, what you are aware of is pleasure or pain. Stimulative pleasure is only one type of pleasure, and all other experiences of life which are not stimulative and not painful are also pleasure.

So when you say "Most of the time, most parts of my body are not feeling [stimulative] pleasure," what you are saying is that most of the time most parts of your body are not feeling either pain or stimulative pleasure. But you have not completed the description: it is right and proper to label what those parts of your body \*are\* feeling at those times as pleasure.

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## Post by “Bryan” of February 12, 2024 at 5:59 PM

### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

...the areas of active pleasure in my body have been limited to specific places and to specific times. Most of the time, most parts of my body are not feeling [stimulative] pleasure.

That is true. Which is fortunate-- because such pleasure is only felt as a relief from pain.

This is also true: We feel total pleasure in most parts of our body, most of the time.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 12, 2024 at 6:14 PM

### [Quote from Bryan](#)

That is true. Which is fortunate-- because such pleasure is only felt as a relief from pain.

This is also true: We feel total pleasure in most parts of our body, most of the time.

I don't think of smelling a rose as a relief from pain, nor is eating dessert!

Right now I am thinking of feeling as an "on" or "off" switch - when the light of awareness is "on" then I am either feeling pleasure or pain.

Also, here is a new idea (whether or not it is in alignment with what others think is correct:

**"Pleasure" is the absence of mental pain (angst and agitation). Whenever we are free from angst and agitation (even if there is a feeling of pain in the physical body) we can call this state "pleasure".**

Just trying this out, for now (but will probably come up with something else soon, lol 😄).

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### Post by "Kalosyni" of February 12, 2024 at 6:27 PM

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

"Pleasure" is the absence of mental pain (angst and agitation). Whenever we are free from angst and agitation (even if there is a feeling of pain in the physical body) we can call this state "pleasure".

I say this based on the story of Epicurus' letter right before his death, in which he was in pain but was happy because of the memory of his friend.

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### Post by "Bryan" of February 12, 2024 at 6:36 PM

#### [Quote from Kalosyni](#)

I don't think of smelling a rose as a relief from pain, nor is eating dessert!

These are variations that we can experience, but do either increase our pleasure?

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 12, 2024 at 7:00 PM

Trying out this idea:

-- Perhaps there are multiple definitions of pleasure which are all correct, and it is all about common sense and making sure that we choose those things which will have a good outcome.

And further these thoughts come to mind:

When we have hunger or thirst, it is a pleasure to have that pain removed.

The enjoyment of stimulating pleasures of the five senses easily arises over and over again in the course of our everyday normal lives.

When we notice a moment that is free from both mental and physical pain, we can feel gratitude and reflect upon that moment as being a pleasure.

Happy memories both need to be made and remembered.

Friends (and family) are one of the most important ways of creating pleasurable moments.

There is no need to live in angst or agitation because these painful mental feelings have remedies.

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## Post by “Novem” of February 13, 2024 at 12:29 AM

I love that Substack is being embraced here. I use Substack for news and social/philosophical commentary. I see some Stoic ones, like Massimo Pigliucci, and I saw that Hiram has one as well for his brand of Epicureanism. Greek philosophy is making a comeback.

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## Post by “Bryan” of September 29, 2024 at 8:04 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

In the same era of Epicurus lived Demetrius I Poliorcetes = "The Besieger" the son of Antigonus I Monophthalmus and Stratonice. He was a Macedonian Greek military leader, and finally king of Macedon (294-288 BC). He belonged to the Antigonid dynasty and was its first member to rule Macedonia and Athens.

When Demetrius removed Cassander's aristocrats that ruled Athens in 307 BC, many Athenians were grateful to have Demetrius as their more lenient master compared to Cassander's men. Epicurus moved back to Athens just a year later.

It seems likely that Epicurus also favored this political turn, as control by Demetrius I Poliorcetes may well have made an environment more conducive to start the community Epicurus wanted to establish -- scholars seem generally allow that he fostered a favorable intellectual climate compared to Cassander. Demetrius also used his "Besieging" know-how to build up-to-date fortifications for Athens... And also, a glance at his personality will show that he just probably would have looked upon Epicurus' philosophy with casual approbation.

But politics is complicated and it seems that 13 years later Athens rebelled against him, unsuccessfully, but it was at that point in 294 BC that I think Epicurus probably did his famous rationing.



**Post by “Bryan” of December 9, 2024 at 12:11 AM**

These are some examples of coins issued in the first two decades of the garden's existence in Athens. Both are coins by *Dēmétrios Poliorkētēs*. When he was younger he showed himself with only horn buds, but eventually, as seen here, with full horns.