

# **How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain by Lisa Feldman Barrett**

**Post by "Cassius" of April 19, 2021 at 3:52 PM**

To expand now I am home, yes - I think this perspective is essential to understanding what appear otherwise to be ambiguities or inconsistencies in the philosophy. Epicurus is all about practicality, and yet he is frequently referring to "pleasure" which is about as broad a word as can possibly be.

I think the reason is that what we have preserved in the letters is the highest-level summary of the philosophy, which as such is necessarily stated in highly abstract terms. That leads to what I think is the key error of the "absence of pain" approach. Those people are attempting to take a highest-level summary and trying to convert it directly into a "what should I eat at noon today" level of detail. Talking about "Pleasure" was never meant to be that kind of immediately practical advice --- or better stated, the immediate practical use of the abstraction "pleasure" is to respond to the false assertion that it is not feeling, but Virtue or Reason or Piety that should be the goal of life.

I think if we had the reams of other material we would see the practical translation of this term into the details we are looking do, but that instead all we have is the highest level outline rather than the details we are expecting to find (having been conditioned by stoicism and religion to detailed do's and don't).

This is not shortsightedness or an error on Epicurus' part but an error on our part in thinking that what amounts to a high-level spec sheet can be used as an operating manual.