

# Torquatus' Statement of the Epicurean View Of The Ultimate Good In "On Ends"

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[40] "The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness, and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity.

Further, to make it plain that pleasure is our utmost good, let us represent to ourselves the condition of a man perpetually regaled with all the variety conceivable of the most ravishing pleasures incident either to the mind or body, without the least alloy of pain, either present or approaching: can any condition of life be more advantageous, or more desirable than this? Especially since it must include such a firmness of soul as renders it proof against the fears of death or pain; death being a loss of all sensation, and pain either long and moderate, or acute and short; so that which ever it proves, there is room for comfort;

But that pleasure is the boundary of all good things may be easily seen from this consideration. Let us imagine a person enjoying pleasures great, numerous, and perpetual, both of mind and body, with no pain either interrupting him at present or impending over him ; what condition can we call superior to or more desirable than this? For it is inevitable that there must be in a man who is in this condition a firmness of mind which fears neither death nor pain, because death is void of all sensation ; and pain, if it is of long duration, is a trifle, while if severe it is usually of brief duration so that its brevity is a consolation if it is violent, and its trifling nature if it is enduring.

XII. Again, the truth that pleasure is the supreme good can be most easily apprehended from the following consideration. Let us imagine an individual in the enjoyment of pleasures great, numerous and constant, both mental and bodily, with no pain to thwart or threaten them; I ask what circumstances can we describe as more excellent than these or more desirable? A man whose circumstances are such must needs possess, as well as other things, a robust mind subject to no fear of death or pain, because death is apart from sensation, and pain when lasting is usually slight, when oppressive is of short duration, so that its reconciles us to its intensity, and its slightness to

[40] Extremum autem esse bonorum voluptatem ex hoc facillime perspici potest: Constituamus aliquem magnis, multis, perpetuis fruentem et animo et corpore voluptatibus nullo dolore nec impediante nec inpendente, quem tandem hoc statu praestabiliorem aut magis expetendum possimus dicere? inesse enim necesse est in eo, qui ita sit affectus, et firmitatem animi nec mortem nec dolorem timentis, quod mors sensu careat, dolor in longinquitate levis, in gravitate brevis soleat esse, ut eius magnitudinem celeritas, diuturnitatem allevatio consoletur.

<p>Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, — and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement. Suppose on the other hand a person crushed beneath the heaviest load of mental and of bodily anguish to which humanity is liable. Grant him no hope of ultimate relief in view; also give him no pleasure either present or in prospect. Can one describe or imagine a more pitiable state?</p>	<p>though to finish the felicity of it, it is necessary that the dread of a Deity be forgotten, and the sweetness of past pleasures very frequently recollected. Again: let us imagine a man afflicted with the saddest agonies and tortures of mind and body, utterly despairing of any relief or relaxation, and wholly lost as well to the remembrance of past, and the expectation of future, as the fruition of any present pleasure; what could we call him but the very accomplishment and idea of misery itself?</p>	<p>And when there is added to these circumstances that such a man has no fear of the deity of the gods, and does not suffer past pleasures to be entirely lost, but delights himself with the continued recollection of them, what can be added to this which will be any improvement to it. Imagine, on the other hand, any one worn out with the greatest pains of mind and body which can possibly befall a man, without any hope being held out to him that they will hereafter be lighter, when, besides, he has no pleasure whatever either present or expected ; what can be spoken of or imagined more miserable than this?</p>	<p>When in addition we suppose that such a man is in no awe of the influence of the gods, and does not allow his past pleasures to slip away, but takes delight in constantly recalling them, what circumstance is it possible to add to these, to make his condition better? Imagine on the other hand a man worn by the greatest mental and bodily pains which can befall a human being, with no hope before him that his lot will ever be lighter, and moreover destitute of pleasure either actual or probable; what more pitiable object can be mentioned or imagined?</p>
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[41] ad ea cum accedit, ut neque divinum numen horreat nec praeteritas voluptates effluere patiatur earumque assidua recordatione laetetur, quid est, quod huc possit, quod melius sit, accedere? Statue contra aliquem confectum tantis animi corporisque doloribus, quanti in hominem maximi cadere possunt, nulla spe proposita fore levius aliquando, nulla praeterea neque praesenti nec expectata voluptate, quid eo miserius dici aut fingi potest?

If then a life full of pain is the thing most to be avoided, it follows that to live in pain is the highest evil; and this position implies that a life of pleasure is the ultimate good. In fact the mind possesses nothing in itself upon which it can rest as final. Every fear, every sorrow can be traced back to pain; there is no other thing besides pain which is of its own nature capable of causing either anxiety or distress.

If therefore a life of torment is the most detestable, undoubtedly it is the greatest evil, and consequently a life of pleasure must be the greatest good, on this side whereof the mind of man finds nothing for it finally to fix upon; as there is nothing besides pain, as that comprehends all sorts of terrors and molestations, which simply and from itself can either disturb or shatter us.

But if a life entirely filled with pains is above all things to be avoided, then certainly that is the greatest of evils to live in pain. And akin to this sentiment is the other, that it is the most extreme good to live with pleasure. For our mind has no other point where it can stop as at a boundary ; and all fears and distresses are referable to pain : nor is there anything whatever besides, which of its own intrinsic nature can make us anxious or grieve us.

But if a life replete with pains is above all things to be shunned, then assuredly the supreme evil is life accompanied by pain; and from this view it is a consistent inference that the climax of things good is life accompanied by pleasure. Nor indeed can our mind find any other ground whereon to take its stand as though already at the goal; and all its fears and sorrows are comprised under the term pain, nor is there any other thing besides which is able merely by its own character to cause us vexation or pangs.

quodsi vita doloribus referta maxime fugienda est, summum profecto malum est vivere cum dolore, cui sententiae consentaneum est ultimum esse bonorum cum voluptate vivere. nec enim habet nostra mens quicquam, ubi consistat tamquam in extremo, omnesque et metus et aegritudines ad dolorem referuntur, nec praeterea est res ulla, quae sua natura aut sollicitare possit aut angere.

		Moreover, the beginnings of desiring and avoiding, and indeed		In addition to this the germs of desire and aversion and generally of action originate either in pleasure or in pain. This being so, it is plain that all right and praiseworthy action has the life of pleasure for its aim. Now inasmuch as the climax or goal or limit of things good (which the Greeks term <i>Telos</i> ) is that object which is not a means to the attainment of anything else, while all other things are a means to its attainment, we must allow that the climax of things good is to live agreeably.
“Pleasure and pain moreover supply the motives of desire and of avoidance, and the springs of conduct generally. This being so, it clearly follows that actions are right and praiseworthy only as being a means to the attainment of a life of pleasure. But that which is not itself a means to anything else, but to which all else is a means, is what the Greeks term the <i>Telos</i> , the highest, ultimate or final Good. It must therefore be admitted that the Chief Good is to live agreeably.	In short, pleasure and pain are the first occasions and springs of all affection, aversion, and action ; whence it is evident, that all the concerns of wisdom and virtue are to be reckoned into the account of a life of pleasure. And thus while we convince ourselves, that when we have said all, a life of jollity and pleasure is the summum bonum, the last and the completest good, into which all others must be resolved, and itself into none;	altogether of everything which we do, take their rise either in pleasure or pain. And as this is the case, it is plain that everything which is right and laudable has reference to this one object of living with pleasure. And since that is the highest, or extreme, or greatest good, which the Greeks call <i>Telos</i> , because it is referred to nothing else itself, but everything is referred to it, we must confess that the highest good is to live agreeably.		[42] Praeterea et appetendi et refugiendi et omnino rerum gerendarum initia proficiscuntur aut a voluptate aut a dolore. quod cum ita sit, perspicuum est omnis rectas res atque laudabilis eo referri, ut cum voluptate vivatur. quoniam autem id est vel summum bonorum vel ultimum vel extremum—quod Graeci τέλος nominant—, quod ipsum nullam ad aliam rem, ad id autem res referuntur omnes, fatendum est summum esse bonum iucunde vivere.