

Article by Voorhoeve: Epicurus on Pleasure, A Complete Life, and Death: A Defense

Post by "Cassius" of March 4, 2022 at 9:26 AM

These claims, and especially the assertion that the greatest pleasure involves nothing more than the removal of all pain (by which Epicurus meant all bodily discomfort and mental distress) have struck commentators as implausible, even bizarre. For example, the Cyrenaics (adherents of a contemporaneous, rival school of hedonistic philosophy) are reported to have scoffed that Epicurus apparently believed that pleasure is maximized when one attains 'the condition of a dead man' ([Clement of Alexandria 2010](#), bk. 2, ch. 21). Cicero, meanwhile, accused the 'strict, austere' Epicurus of outright inconsistency, in first setting us a goal (pleasure) that 'turns out not to be worth seeking', since, according to the first quoted passage, 'we have no need of it so long as we are free from pain!' ([Cicero 2004](#), 2.29). Closer to the present, [Julia Annas \(1987](#), p. 6) remarks that the mere absence of pain and distress are 'nobody's idea of how to maximize pleasure'.

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Julia Annas isn't someone recognizable to quote to others, but she's right too.

Cicero's quote isn't quite as clear, but it's usable too.

All are good quotes to use against someone (maybe even the author of this article?) who wants to posit "Absence of pain" as Epicurus' complete statement of the best life.