

Pleasures of the Mind In Comparison To Pleasures of the Body

Post by “Cassius” of April 13, 2023 at 4:19 PM

We recently had a comment / question asking about this distinction in Epicurean philosophy, and we probably need a subforum or at least a thread with this title. In the context of the question that was asked the question was whether it was proper to distinguish "pleasures of the mind" since everything ultimately originates with the atoms (and asking the question that way implicates the problem with "[reductionist atomism](#)."

When it came up last time I remembered the section from Torquatus which states this point, but not this fragment from Diogenes of Oinoanda:

Fr. 44

[The soul experiences] feelings far greater than the cause which generated them, just as [a fire] vast enough to burn down ports and cities is kindled by an exceedingly small spark. But the pre-eminence of these feelings of [the soul] is difficult for ordinary people to gauge: it is [im]possible to make a direct comparison by experiencing simultaneously the extremes of both (I mean of the feelings of the soul and of the body), since this seldom ever happens and, when it does happen, life is destroyed; and consequently the criterion for determining the pre-eminence of one of the two is not found. Instead, when someone encounters bodily pains, he says that these are greater than those of the soul; and when [he encounters those of the soul, he says that] they [are greater than the others. For] what [is present is] invariably more convincing [than what is absent], and each person is [likely] either through [necessity] or through pleasure, to confer pre-eminence on the feeling which has hold of him. However, this matter, which is difficult for ordinary people to gauge, a wise man calculates on the basis of many factors

[The inscription](#)