

Ruminations on leading with “Pleasure and Pain as the Guide” v “The Goal is Pleasure”

Post by “Onenski” of June 8, 2023 at 10:24 PM

So far, in my understanding of EP, pleasure and pain are complementary. Whenever I talk about my pleasure I'm referring also to a reduction of my pain and vice versa (as the vessel picture of Lucretius suggests). So, "pleasure is the goal" might be a short way to say "reduction of pain and increasing of pleasure are the same thing, and that's the goal of life, e.g. the best way a human being can live. Pleasure and Pain as absolute concepts or things don't exist, these words refer to the feelings produced by the activities we do".

I know this answer refers to a technical understanding of pleasure and pain in EP, and I understand that you, [Godfrey](#), are trying to emphasize the role of pain in practical calculations (or, using Epicurus' words, the "choices and avoidances" in daily life).

I agree that for someone who doesn't know these nuances it's simplistic (and a little misleading) just to say "pleasure is the goal". For new people it's better to explain in longer phrases what's the best way of life for Epicurus (e. g. "the goal of life").

But, for a settled epicurean it can be useful as a reminder. At least, I sometimes repeat to myself "pleasure is the beginning and end of a happy life", specially when I'm stressed or sad.

I hope this helps. (Or, if I'm wrong, I'd like you to tell me.) 😊