

# On freedom from distress = full pleasure

Post by "Cassius" of March 21, 2019 at 5:06 AM

## [Quote from michelepinto](#)

Here is a simple example of why adding pleasure to pleasures is useless, it's definitely better to look for serenity. No boredom like no pain. In the case of my child, play with him, even without any toys.

I am not sure that this is exactly your point, but here is what I see your observation meaning:

It is human nature that we take interest in something for a while, but as we become familiar with it we lose interest in it and wish to move to something else. Toys are limited objects of which we soon get our fill. Which is not to say that that interest we take in new toys is not pleasurable and desirable -- it is -- all pleasure is desirable because it is pleasing.

When you say "play with him, even without toys" you are noting that your time with your child is continuously pleasurable to him because you are not a limited object like a toy - you have many and varied and changing facets and your child does not lose interest in you as quickly (hopefully!).

But it is also probably true that every child DOES lose interest in being around his parent (or any single person) eventually. That is what happens when children grow up and make friends of their own - they eventually leave their parents behind.

So I do not see these observations as leading to the conclusion that, because we lose interest in any single pleasure ("toy") over time, the answer is to substitute "serenity" -- which implies that "serenity" is something entirely different from pleasure. In other words I do not think it would make sense to say "because pleasures get old over time we should turn our attention to something that is not pleasure."

I see your observations meaning that we should learn to understand human nature and how the sense of pleasure works. We should learn not seek to invest our time in "toys" which give short term pleasure at considerable cost, but in which we quickly lose interest. We should learn to pursue those activities that give us the most (longest, intense) pleasure, and least pain, during the entire time we are alive, under the terms of our own circumstances.

I think this same issue is what is being discussed in PD9:

*"If every pleasure had been capable of accumulation, not only over time but also over the entire body or at least over the principal parts of our nature, then pleasures would never differ*

*from one another."*

Epicurus is pointing out that it is NOT true that any single pleasure is capable of accumulation to the point of consuming the total experience of a person for any length of time. That is simply not human nature - human nature does not work that way, and that if that is obvious to us it was obvious to Epicurus. We should not try to force human nature to work other than how it does. Single pleasurable experiences CANNOT be accumulated in such a way as to stay with us throughout our lives without change, so it is necessary for us to live in realization that we move from one set of experiences to another set of experiences, and to keep our sight on the goal of keeping each set of experiences as tuned to contain as many pleasures and as few pains as possible, throughout our entire life.

So I don't think it can be correct that Epicurus defined the guide of how to live in terms of a single pleasure or attribute ("serenity" or any other single word). Rather, the clear implication of what Epicurus is saying is that all of us have a continuously changing total experience, composed of (hopefully) more pleasures than pains. That would be the goal expressed in Cicero's characterization of the Epicurean best life as being "a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures."