

# Episode 196 - The Epicurean Arguments In Cicero's On Ends - Book Two - Part 06

Post by "Cassius" of October 14, 2023 at 3:33 AM

Please check my math and let me know if you see an error:

Pleasure Arithmetic and "Absence of Pain"

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1. There are only two feelings of body or mind: those which are agreeable (pleasure) and those which are disagreeable (pain). Let's call pleasure "A" and pain "B." (It should not be necessary to say that we are including both "body" and "mind," since we are a single organism, but since many people seem to insist on thinking in those two terms, let's be clear that everything said here refers to *both*.)

2. If a person is alive and feeling anything, what he is feeling is either "A" pleasure or "B" pain.

3. "All" the feelings of life = "A" + "B." Let's call all the feelings of life "C."  $A + B = C$

4. "All" the feelings of life means 100% of them. There is no logical way to increase "C" past the total of "A" + "B."

5. Any feeling of agreeable "stimulation" is a pleasure. Everyone admits this. Let's call this type of pleasure "A1".

6. Any non-painful feeling is a pleasure. Not everyone admits this, but this is the logical deduction of points 1 and 2. Let's call this type of pleasure "A2". This does not refer to "stimulation," but instead refers to the normal and healthy feeling of life when no pain or disease is present. Neither A1 nor A2 are intrinsically "better" than the other for all people at all times. Both are part of life and both require prudence and activity to sustain.

7. The most pleasure possible in life is when 100% of life ("C") is composed totally of pleasure, which means 100% A (pleasure, either A1 or A2 or both) and 0% B (pain). We can call this type of life "HP" (the "height of pleasure" or "the highest pleasure" or the "limit of pleasure").

8. If  $C = A + B$  (all feelings of life = the pleasurable feelings + the painful feelings) then  $A = C - B$ . This is another way of saying that the quantity of pleasurable feelings in life is the same as the quantity of feelings in life in which pain is absent. Any feeling of pleasure can therefore be referred to as a feeling of "absence of pain," and any feeling of pain can be referred to as a feeling of "absence of pleasure." This is not a complete description of a particular feeling, any more than the word "pleasure" is a complete description of ice cream or sex. *From this*

perspective, "absence of pain" provides us a single term that describes any and all types of desirable experience, since "absence of pain" includes both A1 (any agreeable stimulation of body or mind + A2 (any non-painful normal experience of body or mind).

9. The most desirable life (which we called "HP" above) is completely pleasure (A1 + A2 with no amount of B), which means a life in which pain is absent. From this perspective, "absence of pain" provides us a single term that describes our goal for life.

10. "Absence of pain" can be used to refer to either "the goal of life" or "any and all types of desirable feelings." Just like the word "Pleasure," which can refer either to "the goal of life" or "any and all types of desirable feeling," the term "absence of pain" has two meanings, depending on which perspective is being discussed.

11. "Absence of pain" does not mean or imply "absence of feeling" or "absence of pleasure." Instead, "absence of pain" refers to any number of pleasurable feelings from a discrete single experience of pleasure all the way up to a total life which is full of pleasures unaccompanied by pains. Therefore when we say that the goal of life is absence of pain, we are not following the gross error of Hieronymus of Rhodes and others who say that the goal of life has nothing to do with pleasure, we are following Epicurus and saying that the goal of life has everything to do with pleasure.

EDIT NOTE: The first version of this post had "experience" in the place of what is now listed as "feeling." This change was made to tighten up the wording - see posts 8 and 9 in this thread below.