

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

Post by “Cassius” of October 16, 2023 at 1:44 PM

It's the connotations of the words that cause us all the problems. "Rest" implies sitting around doing nothing. "Motion" implies physical movement, even though savoring memories, or anything that implies change, is also within the idea of motion. And while "kinetic" is going to evoke frenzy in English-speaking minds, "katastematic" is never going to evoke anything but "woo" or being "comatose" at best.

I can see why it is tempting to define things in the negative so as to give maximum latitude to the expression that anything done during the normal healthy state - whether it involves motion, rest, or whatever, that is not painful is pleasurable.

I want to point something else out that Joshua raised in the podcast that I think is extremely important. Joshua pointed out not one but two sections (if I recall correctly, in regard to (1) pleasure being one name that describes many pleasurable feelings, and (2) the meaning of "variety") where Cicero's analysis of pleasure seems to be tracking very closely to Plato's [Philebus](#) analysis.

I think we need to hold open the strong possibility that not only Torquatus/Cicero, but also Epicurus himself, were intentionally tracking Plato's anti-pleasure analysis.

And that's going to lead us back to the issue of "the limit of pleasure," which was raised as a huge issue in [Philebus](#). I think we are going to find that the term "limit of pleasure" has a very precise reason for being such a central part of the analysis. As part of that, I think we will find that the "limit of pleasure" or "height of pleasure" is not a "DESTINATION" at all, but the "best" ongoing way of conducting the journey of life.

We have been raising but not satisfactorily answering (in my view, at least not fully) the question of why - if on a particular day we should reach 100% pleasure) we should want to live any longer. That's like asking why, if we climb to the top of Mount Everest, we should want to continue to live at all. No one but a Stoic or other warped personality would conclude that meeting a goal like that "once" is "good enough for a lifetime."

I think we're going to conclude that just like the predominance of pains over pleasures describes Epicurus' last day, defining the "limit of pleasure" as containing both "stimulative" forms and "non-stimulative" forms allows us to describe "the best life." But "the best life" is not a destination, but a journey, and just as pleasure was desirable all the way along, more pleasure so long as we can live another day it is also desirable.

The consolation involved in having a "limit of pleasure" is that it gives us a day to day goal to strive for, and it tells us that this is the "best we can do" just like we keep our cars tuned and cleaned so that they run at tip-top performance. The purpose of getting cars in tip-top condition is not so they can sit still and be looked at, but so that they can perform as cars are able to do at the top of their game.

So I think if we continue to compare our Epicurean texts to [Philebus](#), as Joshua is doing, we're going to see that it is a mistake to think of the "end" or "goal" of life as a single destination at which we can arrive and then be satisfied and think to ourselves that "it's time to die."

Quote from Letter to Menoecus

And he who counsels the young man to live well, but the old man to make a good end, is foolish, not merely because of the desirability of life, but also because it is the same training which teaches to live well and to die well. Yet much worse still is the man who says it is good not to be born but *'once born make haste to pass the gates of Death'*.