

# Epicurean versus deceptive (“modern”) Stoic decision making

Post by “Cassius” of August 13, 2024 at 5:33 PM

## [Quote from Julia](#)

To me, the plainest statement of a negative implicitly refers to the broadest interpretation (any → not one).

Example: "There is an absence of food" means that my kitchen is entirely empty. It does not mean "I ran out of rice" or "I have no more soda." Instead, the "absence of food" means I have nothing whatsoever left at all.

I think you're approaching things properly, but you're stating the absence of a positive (food), which clearly means that the kitchen when absent of food has absolutely nothing in it -- the broadest possible interpretation, as you say.

But in the case that is the rule for most modern Epicurean discussion, we're not talking about a positive thing, but a negative thing (pain). So when someone says "the Epicurean goal is the absence of pain," due to the prominence of Stoic and Buddhist and Judeo-Christian "anti-pleasure" views, it is not immediately obvious to many people what should come to mind when the statement "I am feeling no pain" is said. It is unacceptable to many people to include "the whole pantry of possible pleasures" when someone says the kitchen is "without pain." What is immediately presumed to be the case by the "pro-ascetic" world is that when you say "I am free from pain" what you really mean is essentially "I have reached a state of nirvana - nothingness - and I am FREE from all desire and all attachment to the world!" --- Because that is what THEY think "freedom from pain" should mean!

It is impermissible to them to think that when someone says "all pain is gone" that the kitchen is then FULLY STOCKED - with all sorts of pleasures of body and mind, both pleasures that are stimulating to the senses and those pleasures of consciousness of \*anything\* without pain attached to it. Such people want to drain the experience of absence of pain down to what a normal active person would call a "near-death" experience -- because that is the way THEY - such ascetic-minded people - interpret the best life due to their Stoic/Buddhist/Judeo-Christian orientation.

Of course I am not saying that \*everyone\* does this, and we've collected quite a group of people who would never think that way.

But I will contend to you that behind the writing of 90% or more of modern Epicurean commentators (primarily in the Academy, including most **\*\*major\*\*** recognized books OTHER than "Epicurus and His Philosophy" and "Living For Pleasure") that that is the orientation. Their definition of pleasure and absence of pain is the type that any Buddhist or Stoic or Judeo-Christian would love -- and if that is the case, you have virtually a canonical guarantee that that version is *\*not\** what Epicurus was teaching.