

Why Do We Consider The Absence of Pain To Be Pleasure?

Post by "Cassius" of November 7, 2024 at 2:16 PM

[Quote from Julia](#)

Upon committing to pleasure as the guide to life, it becomes apparent that...

The framing of a [recent post by Julia](#), combined with some other thoughts (the title of the book "Living for Pleasure") has revived today in my mind an old question. I think the discussions in this forum have come a long way in the last year, and I'd like to check on how the people who have been following along (primarily our regulars, but even lurkers if they want to set up an account to participate) react to the following question.

We've discussed it many times before, but now, in the context of many recent discussions in which we've pointed out cites that explain how Epicurus had a much more expansive definition of "pleasure" than most people (in his own time and today) generally apply to that word. So when they read a title like "Living For Pleasure," or "I am committed to pleasure as the guide of my life," many people are legitimately confused.

Almost everyone who is new to Epicurus is going to ask, either out loud or in their own minds:

I certainly know what pleasure is, but I've never thought of pleasure as absence of pain. Why does Epicurus consider the absence of pain to be pleasure?

I'd be very interested in whatever formulations of an answer anyone would like to suggest. I'll come back and add my own after some others have commented, but presume you're talking to a normal person in a normal conversation, and they've just read some generic article on the internet and read that Epicurus considered the absence of pain to be pleasure.

They turn to you in normal conversation and they ask "Why did he do that?"

What do you say in reply?