

# Epicurean Philosophy In Relation To Gulags and the Rack

Post by “Pacatus” of April 29, 2025 at 5:06 PM

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

The basic problem here is that “freedom from pain” is made to sound like something different from pleasure, when in fact everything that is not painful is pleasurable when there are only two alternatives, and tasty food is as legitimate a part of the set of total pleasures as is poetry or literature or friendship or anything else. Epicureans don’t narrow the definition of pleasure to an ambiguous state of “absence of XXX” - they expand the definition of pleasure to include all experiences of life that are desirable - and life itself is desirable, with the only undesirable experience falling under the name of “pain.”

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

When you get past superficial readings of the letter to Menoeceus, there’s plenty of textual evidence that explains that Epicurus held there to be only two feelings, and that means - just as stated in Principal Doctrine 3, that when pain is absent then pleasure is present, and the reverse also.

This seems to me to point up what I consider to be the major error of the Cyrenaics (as articulated by Aristippus the Younger): that there is a third “neutral” condition that is neither pleasure nor pain. The Epicurean category of katastematic pleasure - in addition to the kinetic pleasures that seem to be the only ones the Cyrenaics recognized - corrects this error.