

What amount of effort should be put into pursuing pleasure or removing pain?

Post by "Cassius" of June 24, 2025 at 7:41 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

I'm going to maintain that effort - expending energy for a given purpose - has pain associated with it.

I think we definitely agree on that, and that's why it is so important to see happiness as a balance in which pleasure predominates over pain, rather than expecting that TOTAL absence of pain is going to be achievable in real life.

I see this as probably one of the most practical and important divisions in the way one will interpret Epicurus.

There is the "extinguish all pain at all cost" crowd, (which I suspect to be largely influenced by Buddhism and similar thought) who talk mostly about "*ataraxia*," without making much effort to define it, and think that what it means is something like tranquility and living as minimally and detached from the world as possible. This group has as their guiding light as the avoidance of pain - which they often translate into the avoidance of all "effort" of any kind.

And then there is the crowd (where I perceive most all of us to be) which perceives that Epicurus was happy even in the worst pain of kidney disease, just as the wise man can be happy even under torture. The group focuses on *eudaimonia* / happiness understood to mean the predominance of pleasure over pain, so the guiding light of this group is the intelligent choice or avoidance of pain, so we embrace pain when we expect that pain to produce a net gain in pleasure. We certainly don't go out of our way to look for pain that is unnecessary, but we recognize that "effort" is necessary to achieve the happiness we'd like to achieve in life, so we don't shrink from exerting that effort.