

# Episode 295 - Plutarch's Absurd Interpretation of Epicurean Absence of Pain

Post by "Cassius" of August 21, 2025 at 9:59 AM

## [Quote from Rolf](#)

2) I had absolutely zero knowledge of Epicureanism before coming here. My confusion here does not stem from the mainstream false interpretations of Epicurus. I hadn't read Cicero or Plutarch, nor had I read any inaccurate books on Epicurean philosophy. While people like Cicero and Plutarch seemed to have wilfully distort Epicurus' words, my questions about the philosophy come from a place of organic confusion. This matters because it means that I'm not struggling to break away from some prior false interpretation of the texts, but instead I'm trying to understand things from a fairly neutral standpoint. Your argument seems to focus a lot on disproving Cicero and Plutarch's falsehoods, which I already disagree with, rather than independently clarifying the Epicurean view.

Yes I follow you and I think that's important. It's a remark that is kind of like Dave's perfectly correct comment to the effect that every quantum scientist is not a mystic in disguise.

All it takes is reading the letter to Menoeceus without any prior or other reading whatsoever and you're thrown headlong into this confusion.

That's because if we start and stop with that letter we are taking Epicurus' words out of context, and not accounting for the circumstance that Epicurus was writing for students who wanted summaries to make things easier to remember, but who were otherwise very familiar and had intimate access to his full views. For example, [PD03](#) about the limit of the quantity of pleasure, and their inability to co-exist (and therefore there are only two options) is not spelled out in the letter to Menoeceus, but is essential background to avoid this confusion about "absence of pain."

You're not more confused than most other new readers. You're doing what most new readers fail to do -- rather than walk away from the obvious omissions from the letter and accepting apparent contradictions or even mysticism, you're seeing how that interpretation makes no sense and that it's essential to bring the full picture into focus so that this part can be understood.