

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

Post by "Cassius" of August 28, 2025 at 7:20 PM

## Quote

I'm imagining someone laying down on a sun lounger, hands behind their head, saying "it doesn't get better than this".

To push back even harder on this point: All experiences of pleasure are real experiences of pleasure, but every time we say "for example" and imply that our example will impress another person as being a "highest good," we risk giving the impression that the person listening should immediately agree that this experience would be FOR THEM TOO the same kind of "absence of pain." No individual tree constitutes the forest, and singling out one example is always going to risk confusing the two levels that are being discussed. Forests exist. Trees exist. But the two are not the same, and a single maple tree is no more indicative of a forest than is a single pine or a single oak.

Many of us are so fed up with worthless abstractions that we think all abstractions are worthless, but that's not the case, and abstractions such as are involved in visualizing the best life are essential. We can't hope to reach a target without visualizing the target, but everyone's target is going to look different.

The "Dude's" lifestyle is no more or less necessarily indicative of the Epicurean concept of a best life than would be that of Julius Caesar. The concept of the best life is broad enough to include these two extremes and any number in between. Trying to tie down the best life into a single example isn't possible, and the idea that it might be possible can be very damaging, because trying to do so ignores the Epicurean viewpoint about the nature of the universe and the absence of absolute forms.

The Epicurean texts don't describe "the best life" in any but very general mental and bodily terms, culminating in the description of 100% pleasure 0% pain, which we ought to recognize is the best terminology that by definition can be achieved.