

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

Post by "Cassius" of August 29, 2025 at 9:32 AM

You know something else i would add to this argument harks back to what Plutarch cited. In arguing that the animals do not stop activity after they are no longer hungry or thirsty, but proceed to play and fly and swim and engage in other activities solely for enjoyment, Plutarch reminds us of Epicurus' core argument. Epicurus takes as the gold standard what the young of all species do before they are corrupted. And while there are many statements about absence of pain that are regularly twisted to imply that we are different, and we as humans should go comatose after we reach a subsistence level of "absence of pain," I am not aware of many surviving statements for the reverse position. The major one I can recall is that of Torquatus in On Ends where "Looking to the young of all species" is specifically stated to be Epicurus' proof that pleasure is by Nature desirable.

Given that we can all see that the young of all species engage in play, and that Epicurus would have seen the same thing, yet Epicurus never said that he would reject "play" from life, this seems to me a strong argument against the Plutarch "absence of pain is a stated of anesthesia" position. If Epicurus had meant for us to reject the "play" of young animals, he would have said so specifically and not used their conduct as the basis of his philosophy.

Is anyone aware of other less familiar citations that we can use to bolster this argument (the young of all species pursue active pleasures and therefore so should we) beyond Torquatus?

## Quote

Epicurus places this standard in pleasure, which he lays down to be the supreme good, while pain is the supreme evil; and he founds his proof of this on the following considerations.

[30] Every creature, as soon as it is born, seeks after pleasure and delights therein as in its supreme good, while it recoils from pain as its supreme evil, and banishes that, so far as it can, from its own presence, and this it does while still uncorrupted, and while nature herself prompts unbiased and unaffected decisions. So he says we need no reasoning or debate to shew why pleasure is matter for desire, pain for aversion.