

Comparing The Pleasure of A Great Physicist Making A Discovery To The Pleasure of A Lion Eating A Lamb

Post by "Cassius" of September 4, 2025 at 10:03 AM

Another general comment about why I think topics like this are so helpful.

To me, when you drill down and realize that for an individual some pleasures are much "greater" than others in terms of intensity, duration, and parts of the body affected, you see clearly that some specific pleasures are much more desirable to you than others. All pleasure is pleasure because it is desirable, but all pleasures are not the same in every respect to all people at all times, or even to the same person at different times, and therefore as to specific characteristics, some pleasurable experiences can be more pleasurable (more intense, longer lasting, or affecting more parts of the body) than others.

This observations exposes as absolute B.S. the ascetic interpretation: that we should simply work to remove all specific pains, and therefore abrakadabra we are at the height of our individual experience of pleasure.

In my humble opinion no human being of moderate intelligence, and certainly not Epicurus, would make such an assertion. Epicurus' assertion was the philosophic one that when you have 100% pleasure you cannot go to 101%, and that constitutes the limit of pleasure. Epicurus never said to discard your common sense and experience and think that for you, a life of filing your fingernails is the equivalent of a life of a physicist going from discovery to discovery.

In order to experience the height of pleasure possible TO YOU, you must act to make sure that your pleasures are those that you in fact feel to be the best possible combination of pleasures to you. Obsessing over identification and removal of every pain does nothing to optimize your best mix of activities and therefore pleasures.

And that's why I will always maintain that what people are doing by discussing "Absence of pain" without explaining this context is playing into the hands of Cicero and Plutarch and all the other enemies of Epicurus.