

Episode 299 - TD27 - Was Epicurus Right That There Are Only Two Feelings - Pleasure And Pain?

Post by "Cassius" of September 17, 2025 at 3:07 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

Nothing. I am in a neutral state, I am feeling neither pleasure nor pain.

Then you are not alive but dead.

Harrrrumph! Well, the absence of pain is not the highest pleasure.

If you are alive, you are **feeling**, experiencing sensations. Someone who is alive is always feeling...

As to especially "*then you are not alive but dead*" and also "*someone who is alive is always feeling*," that is not the way most people talk, and Cicero is going to win that argument every day of the week in front of most juries, Greek, Roman, or today. When it's Epicurus' turn to speak, he's going to have to give more explanation than that to satisfy any fair-minded jury.

In a recent zoom meeting [TauPhi](#) raised this issue in regard to "the size of the sun is as it appears to be" (and perhaps as to other contexts as well). He said in essence that "sloganeering" can be fun but it is not persuasive.

Not saying that *you* or Epicurus are sloganeering or not being a fair-minded juror of course, but I think you know what I mean! 😊 What we have looks like sloganeering because the enemies of Epicurus have selectively preserved the part they want to keep without the part that explains it.

When people of good faith are being approached with something new, they have to be brought along at the right speed. I'm thinking more along the lines of the way Frances Wright has Epicurus speaking to Zeno in *A Few Days In Athens*, there needs to be a "wind-up" before the pitch. "If you are alive you are feeling something" and "absence of pain is pleasure" and "absence of pain is in fact the highest pleasure" are smoking-hot fastballs on which most batters are going to strike out.

But we're not trying to deceive the batter and strike him out by throwing it *past* him. We're trying to telegraph the pitch, and deliver it right over the plate so the batter can hit it out of the park.