

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

Post by "Cassius" of September 17, 2025 at 6:06 PM

[Quote from Don](#)

That's the point. What they rightly subjectively perceive as blahness isn't the highest pleasure. They are not really free from all pain. I would go so far as to say that none of us are ever going to be at the highest pleasure.

I agree with that.

But ok, where's the disconnect? Torquatus is making these statements very "flatly," He's speaking almost literally "The absence of pain is pleasure - in fact it's the highest pleasure." And I'd say that Epicurus is doing the same thing in the letter to Menoeceus. There's an explanation for the different perspectives, but I don't think we are yet articulating that explanation as Epicurus would.

For the generic man-on-the-street "I feel no pain" doesn't translate into "you are experiencing the height of pleasure" without more explanation that tells them how they are "looking at things" wrong. And leaving out the explanation as Cicero and Plutarch do makes Epicurus look ridiculous. In the case of [Epicurus' letter to Menoeceus](#) I think we can excuse the omission on the grounds that Menoeceus was to all appearances a student, for whom this letter was a summary, and he would be expected to know the full explanation. But for those of us reading Cicero or Plutarch or reading the letter out of context, there's much more to be said.