

Discussion of Article: "On Pleasure, Pain and Happiness"

Post by "Cassius" of July 13, 2019 at 4:48 AM

[Quote from Elayne](#)

I don't see the cup as representing numbers of experiences but the organism's feeling capacity.

On this specific part - this is where I worry that it is important to stress BOTH that the vessel provides the limits of the capacity (meets the logic test of having a limit), but that what is contained within the vessel are many different "real" experiences (ie pleasure means pleasure and not emotionlessness). I therefore prefer to try to hit hard that the contents are food, music, dance etc -- real understandable feelings -- rather than ambiguous terms like "absence of pain." Again, the issue is more who we are talking to, and what meaning they are predisposed to hear in the term "absence of pain." For the present contexts I am thinking that 90% of the people observing our discussion will immediately think to themselves "What does he mean?" when they hear the term "absence of pain."

And not to be too harsh on "modern" students, apparently Cicero himself thought it was very effective to suggest that "absence of pain" is a worrisome term. And he was apparently right to think that, given how persuasive his argument that "absence of pain as the highest pleasure makes no sense" has proven to be. When competent Epicureans were around to explain they were probably confident of their terminology, but without them around to defend it, the argument has become devastatingly effective. Epicurean philosophy has been mutated into form of Stoicism.