

# Welcome Max Duboff

Post by "Cassius" of July 7, 2026 at 2:16 PM

Max,

The twentieth-meal example is very useful.

Let me restate it to make sure I have it right: given a choice between 10 units of pleasure/0 pain and 30 units of pleasure/3 pain, "refer your actions to the goal of nature as tranquility" tells you to take the first option — forfeiting 17 units of net pleasure - solely to avoid the 3 units of pain.

Is that a fair restatement of your own answer?

So you're saying that on your view, no amount of net pleasure gained can outweigh even a modest amount of pain accepted to get it. That's the "even a small amount of pain is too much to pay for a large amount of pleasure" position I've been thinking your view amounts to. Is that correct?

As to what that would mean, Epicurus wrote on his last day, in real physical agony, that the joy of memory and friendship that day outweighed (or arrayed against in the military metaphor) the pain in his body. This is a direct claim that a great pleasure was worth to him a very great pain, in full net balance. Regardless about what we think of whether he changed his calculation as the pain got worse (which would be entirely reasonable to do), Epicurus did not avoid or forfeit those pleasures in advance just because great pain was involved.

Your rule would have told Epicurus in advance never to have made the friendships at all, since every friendship carries the certainty of future grief — real pain — in exchange for something "merely additive" and therefore, on your account, not counting toward blessedness. Do you accept that consequence?

Second thing, maybe even more important. You've now stated at least twice that you don't know why Epicurus would be committed to the claim that a blessed life has to be complete or perfect in the Platonic sense. Everything you're saying after that, that additive pleasures can't confer blessedness, friendship is instrumental rather than itself a pleasure/good, seems built entirely on that starting point. If you can't explain that reasoning, why would we find it persuasive to overturn all the many statements commending Pleasure as the goal?

As to friendship, [PD27](#) doesn't call friendship just a useful tool alongside the virtues — it calls it "far the greatest" of the things which "produce the blessedness of the complete life." If friendship is instrumental the way courage or prudence are instrumental, why does Epicurus single it out instead of listing it among them? I think Epicurus is telling us the pleasure of

friendship is a major part of what a full life is made of, not that it's a mechanism that occasionally throws off some pleasant ("nice") side effects.

I don't think "tranquility as prime directive" survives contact with either the deathbed letter or [PD27](#). I'd like to hear you take those two head-on., because that's what is of most benefit to the forum - providing understandable answers that are of practical use to the kind of normal people to whom Epicurus appealed in the ancient world. It can't have required a degree in philosophy to understand Epicurus in the ancient world, and it can't require that now.

As Cassius Longinus said himself to Cicero,

... For it is hard to convince men that "the good is to be chosen for its own sake"; but that pleasure and tranquillity of mind is acquired by virtue, justice, and the good is both true and demonstrable. Why, Epicurus himself, from whom all the Catiuses and Amafiniuses in the world, incompetent translators of terms as they are, derive their origin, lays it down that "to live a life of pleasure is impossible without living a life of virtue and justice."

Why pleasure AND tranquility? Are you saying that as with the title to "Living For Pleasure," Cassius Longinus should have written "but that pleasure (and by that i mean tranquility) is acquired by virtue, justice, and the good is both true and demonstrable?"

Catius and Amafinius may not have been the smoothest of translators of images vs. spectres, but is it really likely they too missed something as basic as not understanding the right priority between pleasure and tranquility?