

Discussion of the thread - Against Katastematic Supremacy - Pleasure Is A Unified Whole And Not A House Divided - Forum Editorial Policy

Post by "Cassius" of August 3, 2026 at 11:35 PM

Dave's post has me focused on trying to identify what I see to be two different camps with two different sets of foundational premises:

Camp one maintains that goal is a feeling that is specifically identifiable with "absence of pain." They believe that this term describes not only a specific feeling, but that this specific feeling is the most pleasurable experience that anyone can reach. As with Dave's post, it is of no concern to them which combination of activities that people normally associate with the word "pleasure" might be part of the goal of getting to zero pain. They see "absence of pain" as naming a state that they consider to be an extremely good feeling without need for any further definition. And from this perspective, "pleasure" as ordinarily understood is a threat to absence of pain and no amount of pleasure is sufficient to accept the cost of any amount of pain. So this group prioritizes "pain reduction" and focuses on identifying pains to remove as their first priority. Their goal is to *minimize total pain* - regardless of any calculation of "ordinary" pleasures - because they consider the specific state of "absence of pain" better than any combination of other mental or bodily pleasures. Does not all this add up to the goal of "*minimizing total pain*"? And does it not conflict with the proposition that we will sometimes choose pain in order to obtain a greater pleasure? Even worse, is not the goal of "minimizing total future pain" not logically indistinguishable from what is accomplished by dying? (The only way it would logically be distinguishable would be to argue that the dead experience no pleasure, but pleasure is strictly speaking not included within the goal of minimizing total pain.)

Camp two sees the position of camp one as something incomprehensible. They see the goal of "absence of pain" as naming a condition in which it is implied that they are experiencing the many different types of ordinary mental and physical pleasures that are associated with daily life - eating, drinking, reading, talking with friends, zip-lining, etc. -- with no combination of pain distracting them from concentrating on those other pleasures. This camp sees the idea of attaching the name "absence of pain" to a specific feeling as nonsensical. And in fact they see Camp One's view of absence of pain to be describing something much more like a "corpse" than a life devoted to pleasure as the supreme good. So this group focuses on ordinary mental and physical pleasures according to the rule of whether the particular pleasurable activity brings more pleasure than pain. Thus their goal is to *maximize net pleasure*, fully realizing that some pain is involved in doing so. This is fully consistent with Epicurus' limit of pleasure, because pleasures cannot be maximized beyond extending to 100% of your experience- which

is the meaning of absence of pain.

In this post I'm not trying to resolve any conflict between the two positions, I am first trying to describe what I am seeing more accurately.

So might it in fact be something that can be summarized by viewing the issue as being between the competing goals of:

Maximizing Net Pleasure vs Minimizing Total Pain