

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 4, 2026 at 1:45 PM

Dave, I appreciate your engaging on this; it was your posts yesterday that led to a discussion last night at our "meet and greet" and kept me awake last night thinking about it all.

[Quote from DaveT](#)

No, what I mean is that once you eliminate pain(s) you have pleasure automatically and immediately. You don't need to do anything to turn to pleasure. Now, take that short explanation and see how I don't care about any discussion of kinetic and katastematic pleasures. Epicurus is telling me quite clearly that absent pain, I have pleasure.

While this does some work toward clarification I don't think it goes far enough. I think it is fair to say what we are talking about is this, and the difficulties that arise from departing from it by suggesting that we should triangulate our decisions on the basis of any term other than pleasure, as stated here: *"We are inquiring, then, what is the final and ultimate Good, which as all philosophers are agreed must be of such a nature as to be the End to which all other things are means, while it is not itself a means to anything else. This Epicurus finds in pleasure; pleasure he holds to be the Chief Good, pain the Chief Evil."*

Your statement taken literally continues to say "once you eliminate pains..." as if the only pleasure you are really insisting on are whatever you happen to find available when pain is gone. Yes, because there are two feelings, when pain is gone there is pleasure. Yes, when pain is gone, then the pleasure that remains is pure or complete or unadulterated by pain. That is the most pure or complete or unadulterated it can be. But are you telling me that Epicurus was blind to the differences between pleasures that he discussed in [PD09](#) as differing in duration, intensity, and parts of the body that are affected? Certainly he was not, and he was focusing his efforts in life on particular steps which he calculated would bring him the most pleasure (studying nature, building a school, gathering together teammates), all of which required significant costs in pain of exertion, making of enemies, etc. Had Epicurus held "I am not going to pursue those pleasures until I eliminate every pain from my life" we would not know about him in order to have this forum -- Epicurus would never have done anything beyond chasing pains to their minimum -- and like all of us, he never fully escaped them, as we know from his "poor health" and painful death.

So yes Epicurus is telling you that every time you eliminate pain what takes its place is "a" pleasure. But it would be the height of irresponsibility not to calculate your actions to make sure that your pleasures that you achieve in your circumstance are those of the longest duration, greatest intensity, and involved the most of the total mind and body that are possible to you. And part of the reason I say "height of irresponsibility" is that Epicurus has drilled into us that when we die we are gone forever, so that we need to take great care how we spend our time, which is just another way of saying that we should firmly direct the pleasures that we seek to achieve. And we do NOT wait until "all pains are gone" before we start making sure that our pleasures are as gratifying to us as possible.

Ok that's going to cover most of what I suspect you'll want to respond to, but I will touch on other aspects of the rest.

[Quote from DaveT](#)

I am in a state of pleasure which I can increase any way I choose within the hedonic calculus.

The issue there is being clear about "increase." From the perspective of "increase," when you truly have no pain it is not possible to increase pleasure from that point, because when there are only two options, and one of the options is gone, you are already completely full of the other option.

The problem that underlies much of this debate is that "completeness" does not say anything about duration, intensity, parts of the body affected, or anything else about the details of the specific pleasures under discussion. We don't experience "pleasure" as a concept any more than we experience color as a concept -- we experience specific pleasures and we see specific colors. The conceptual terms allow Epicurus and us to talk about categories, but those terms tell us NOTHING about the specifics within those categories, some of which are much more desirable than others. I am sure that statement will generate some pushback but Epicurus says all pleasures are desirable --- he never says all pleasures are EQUALLY desirable, and indeed it would be ridiculous to say so.

[Quote from DaveT](#)

Man, I love your processes, but please give me time to plumb your prior comments before supporting your position with more material. I can't keep up and feel like you are giving me too many things to think about before I can finish my conversation. me out of the water. Can we come back to this after you actually read my response?



Like I said I read your comments yesterday closely and I very much appreciate them because they are helping me focus in on the deepest issues.

The term "absence of pain" as applied to real life is another Rorschach test that can mean anything to anyone. It is useful in context when you are debating categories and abstractions, but it tells you NOTHING about the particular experience under discussion without reading much more into it.

Since pleasure and pain cannot coexist at the same space per [PD03](#), any particular pleasure can also be called "absence of pain." But of course what we are reading into the term most of the time is to read it as *complete* absence of pain as a way of trying to figure out what could have been meant by using words like highest or best in the same sentence, as did Epicurus and Torquatus and presumably others as well. That's what's invaluable about On Ends because it shows this term being debated and used in multiple constructions, which shows that "absence of pain" and "pleasure" can be used identically but in multiple ways. "Pleasure" without a qualifier can be read to mean "pure pleasure" just like "yellow" can mean pure yellow. Same for "absence of pain" - it can refer to the goal, or any part of the experience along the way that is not painful.

The real issue is being clear about what the goal really means, as Torquatus did in saying "let us imagine..." and went into detail about the numerous and vivid pleasures *as well as* the freedom from the particular fears (pains) that he listed.

Torquatus moves back and forth between the general and the particular in order to explain their relationship. We have to do the same if we are going to avoid having "absence of pain" be interpreted as a prescription for retreat, resignation, and the rest.

Because that is exactly what is going on [out there in the world](#) by the legions of people who say "The world got Epicurus wrong -- he really wasn't into pleasure at all!"