

Can We Experience Pleasure in One Part of Our Experience and Pain In Another Part of our Experience At the Same Time?

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 6, 2020 at 1:04 PM

[Cassius](#) Thanks for taking time to dig deeply on my post. Here is my response to your concerns:

“Mental pleasure exists only when you have peace of mind.”

Your question in mind is the “only” part of my statement. More or less, you have already answered it by saying “I think it is correct Epicurean thought to point out that pleasure and pain are separate feelings and do not blend together.”

To provide you with the basis of my statement, here is a portion of what Torquatus presented in the Book 1 part 11 paragraph 38 of Cicero’s *On Ends*: “Epicurus consequently maintained that there is no such thing as a neutral state of feeling intermediate between pleasure and pain; for the state supposed by some thinkers to be neutral, being characterized as it is by entire absence of pain, is itself, he held, a pleasure, and, what is more, a pleasure of the highest order.”

So there is only pleasure when there is no pain. Although I know it is also true when you said “I would think it is possible to experience some feelings of mental pleasure while also having a concern that there are worries that need to be addressed,” this could happen alternatively at a time.

However, I still can’t imagine if it happens at the same time because as far as I know pleasure is a product or result of the removal of pain and not two entities that can take place at one particular moment or state. Here is my basis where I also got from the same book in the paragraph 37: “...the complete removal of pain has correctly been termed a pleasure. For example, when hunger and thirst are banished by food and drink, the mere fact of getting rid of uneasiness brings a resultant pleasure in its train. So generally, the removal of pain causes pleasure to take its place.”

With regard to peace of mind, I understand it to be the absence of disturbance. Here I quote from number 79 of the *Vatican Sayings*: “He who has peace of mind disturbs neither himself nor another.”

And as far as I know, disturbance, annoyance, and uneasiness are not different from one another. The removal of any of them will result in peace of mind, hence pleasure (Of course it is mental pleasure since peace of mind is a mental state). Still in paragraph 37 of Cicero’s *On Ends*, Torquatus said “When we are released from pain, the mere sensation of complete

emancipation and relief from uneasiness is in itself a source of gratification. But everything that causes gratification is a pleasure (just as everything that causes annoyance is a pain).

About my statement "...you are still wanting only when you have no limit to what you want."

What I am talking about here is that unlimited desire will not satisfy us. I based such statement from number 81 of the *Vatican Sayings*: "The soul neither rids itself of confusion nor gains a joy worthy of the name through the possession of supreme wealth, nor by the honor and admiration bestowed by crowds, nor through any of the other things sought by unlimited desire."

I have just mentioned that unlimited desire will not satisfy us because this is what I understand from number 68 of the *Vatican Sayings*: "Nothing is ever enough for someone who regards enough as insufficient."

About the limiting part, I am referring to the elimination of false idea of endless satisfaction through endless desire and wants. I understand it to be correct based on number 59 of the *Vatican Sayings*: "What cannot be satisfied is not a man's belly, as men think, but rather his false idea about the unending filling of his belly."

Nevertheless, I do not claim to be absolutely correct or accurate. I just rely so far on some pieces of the original works of Epicurus. You recommended that I read Norman DeWitts' book which you are probably using as an appropriate gauge to measure whether or not a particular comment on Epicurus is correct. This will make me further understand your observation and comments. But so far, this is what I understand based on the original works. I am starting to read DeWitt though.

Lastly, you mentioned "So I am thinking that some of the points could probably be tightened up to be more accurate to the Epicurean viewpoint (which I am presuming is your goal there)."

Yes. That is my goal. That is the reason why I strive to be as close as possible to what has been originally said by Epicurus himself. The problem is...it is also my goal to bring Epicurean philosophy to lay audience, and this effort will probably dilute the exactness of Epicurus' thought into ordinary words which may become quite general, vague, and shallow. It is a dilemma that I have to face at the expense of accuracy.