

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

Post by "Cassius" of January 6, 2020 at 1:17 PM

Great discussion Mike thank you. We are not very far apart at all.

Where I am thinking that greater precision could be gained is an issue I have discussed with Elayne. Are pain and pleasure "cumulative" summaries of all feelings being perceived at a particular moment? What happens when (for example) your eye relays a scene that you find pleasurable, while at the same time your toe is hurting from an ingrown nail? The eye (or some other part of the body perceiving a sensation that is pleasurable) is relaying information simultaneously with the toe perceiving pain. Definitely both perceptions are different and we are talking about either pleasure OR pain, we fully agree that there can be only one or the other.

But i don't think that Epicurus' theory requires (or even allows) that we sum up our total perceptions into one sum that is either pleasurable or painful, and I think that would be required for the "only" parts of your statements to be valid.

Now, it might be arguable that you can only pay attention to one thing at one time, and that you will register that feeling at the instant that you direct your attention to the toe as painful, and then change your assessment in another instant as you direct your attention to your eye. Is that the position that you wish to argue, or that you think Epicurus was contemplating?

I am open to the idea that the mind can only be aware of one thing at a time, but that doesn't seem intuitively true to me, so I am not yet convinced that that is what Epicurus would have been thinking about. Summation of all feelings/perceptions into a sum, and saying that your consciousness can only feel pain or pleasure at a single instant, seems to me to cause problems (such as creating the kind of "mixed states" which he pretty clearly wanted to avoid). It may seem like i myself am the one advocating mixed states, but I am saying that i think Epicurus was talking at the perceptual level, and saying that a particular perception can only be painful OR pleasurable, rather than saying that we can't be aware of more than one thing at a single time. In fact that's exactly what I think is involved in viewing life as a "vessel" which contains discrete experiences of pain and pleasure, with the goal of eliminating from the vessel all experiences of pain and having the vessel be full of experiences of pleasure.