

Glossary - What is the Epicurean Definition of "Pleasure?"

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 8:03 AM

Thread for discussion of the [FAQ Answer Located Here](#)


Post by "Charles" of January 14, 2020 at 11:48 AM

Maybe a thread, or an inclusion in the thread concerning pleasure, we should note the "moving" and "static" definitions and how they're limited (as opposed to how much credit Neo-Epicureans give them).

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 11:50 AM

Charles I am going to copy this into the FAQ thread on pleasure here: [Glossary - What is the Epicurean Definition of "Pleasure?"](#)

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 11:51 AM



Online

Charles

3 - Friend of Epicurus

3 minutes ago

#5 

Maybe a thread, or an inclusion in the thread concerning pleasure, we should note the "moving" and "static" definitions and how they're limited (as opposed to how much credit Neo-Epicureans give them).

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 12:07 PM

Updated to incorporate your suggestion Charles - thank you.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 1:31 PM

In the last paragraph of the part XVI of Book 1 of *On Ends*, Torquatus said "...and that to live happily is nothing else except to live with pleasure.

I'm not sure whether it has a double meaning or a problem in translation.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 1:36 PM

Thanks Mike! Just as you were posting that comment I was pasting the same thing into an updated version. That is one of the most clear statements of the proposition that I am aware of.

Post by “Charles” of January 14, 2020 at 1:52 PM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

I'm not sure whether it has a double meaning or a problem in translation.

The past week I've been exploring this topic and the misconceptions that arise from it.

The first paragraph of Chapter XI from Torquatus ends with a section that echoes a point established in L to M.

"The pleasure we pursue is not that kind alone which directly affects our physical being with a delightful feeling,—a positively agreeable perception of the senses; on the contrary, the greatest pleasure according to us is that which is experienced as a result of the complete removal of pain. When we are released from pain, the mere sensation of complete emancipation and relief from uneasiness is in itself a source of gratification."

It's definitely worth looking into, perhaps another translation can clarify. I'm of the opinion that the school held both (methods of arriving at pleasure) in high regard.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 1:59 PM

Yup. It's worth looking into. But I feel this happiness is not Eudaemonic as that of Aristotle's.

Post by “Charles” of January 14, 2020 at 2:03 PM

There are multiple sources that conflict with this, both from Epicurus and those later, maybe I should make a thread like mine with the obscure Epicurean books, detailing every slight mention of this dualistic statement (Pleasure is the feeling of desires satisfied & pleasure is the absence of pain)

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 2:05 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

I'm of the opinion that the school held both (methods of arriving at pleasure) in high regard.

Charles yes that it is absolutely clear (that pleasure is both mental and bodily). I am not sure if you are making a point here that disagrees with the point that "a life of happiness is a life of pleasure" because I see no difference.... (?)

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 2:06 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

on the contrary, the greatest pleasure according to us is that which is experienced as a result of the complete removal of pain.

If you are focusing on THIS part, then that is the old question that we debate continuously and would presumably relate to the quantity argument -- given that absence of one is presence of the other.

But bottom line is that there is no contradiction.

Post by "Charles" of January 14, 2020 at 2:08 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

If you are focusing on THIS part

I'm focusing on it only to the extent in which it was quoted in Torquatus. I'm not looking into the merits of the argument, but the literary sources that espouse it.

Post by "Mike Anyayahan" of January 14, 2020 at 6:08 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Thanks Mike! Just as you were posting that comment I was pasting the same thing into an updated version. That is one of the most clear statements of the proposition that I am aware of.

You're welcome Cassius. What makes me wonder is whether we pursue happiness for pleasure or pleasure for happiness...only if they are two different things. If they are just the same, I am curious why Torquatus had to emphasize that to live happily is nothing except to live with pleasure.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 6:13 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

I'm focusing on it only to the extent in which it was quoted in Torquatus. I'm not looking into the merits of the argument, but the literary sources that espouse it.

Would you mean the definitions of both pleasure and pain or the differences between pleasure and happiness?

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 6:23 PM

I think [Elayne's article](#) makes a lot of good points on this. I also think that there are a lot of intricate side questions, starting with something as obvious as pointing out that "happiness" is not a Greek word and not therefore not the exact word that Epicurus used, so we have to be careful of two thousand years of potential changes in shades of meaning, plus translation issues, at the very beginning.

We've had extensive discussions about this in the past and we will probably be discussing these issues as long as we remain interested in philosophy. In the end we have to try to reduce the discussion to something workable, and we know that Epicurus held "pleasure" to be the guide of life, the alpha and omega, and all that, and he did not use the word "happiness" in that context.

In trying to sum up conclusions about the relationship to happiness and pleasure it seems to me that that observation has to ultimately be the test by which we sum up Epicurean philosophy in an understandable outline.

So we have to come to grips with why "pleasure" and not "happiness" occupies the central keystone role in Epicurean philosophy.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 6:42 PM

[Cassius](#) I also came across online lectures that say that the kind of pleasure Epicureans hold is ataraxia. Is there any truth in this? As far as I know ataraxia is what the Stoics are aiming. Does it mean the Epicurean meaning of tranquility is the same as that of Stoicism? It sounds odd. This makes me think that the absence of pain alone is not enough to define either pleasure or happiness.

Post by “Charles” of January 14, 2020 at 7:02 PM

[Mike Anyayahan](#)

I believe the Stoics are looking for Eudaimonia, Ataraxia is much more Epicurean.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 7:02 PM

Yes that (the focus on tranquility / ataraxia / peace of mind as some unique kind of highest pleasure) is a common assertion that I reject, Mike, and I think you will find that Dewitt states it considerably differently. In fact I do not believe that either ataraxia or aponia are "kinds of pleasure." I believe they are adverbs that describe ways / contexts in which pleasure (ordinary pleasures of all kind) are experienced. In other words, the best way to experience any pleasure is "without distraction" (ataraxia) and "without pain" (aponia).

An illustration I would give would be applicable to any pleasure, but let's just choose "dancing." The best way to experience dancing would be not to be distracted from dancing (don't fall,

don't bump into others, don't get called away to do something else) and without any pain mixed in (don't be distracted thinking about painful thoughts) while you are dancing.

I think that is the obvious and commonsensical interpretations of those words, and I think Epicurus was nothing if not common-sensical about the way he thought.

These people who elevate "ataraxia" to something unique in itself are basically playing the katastematic pleasure game of suggesting there is something different and better than pleasure as ordinarily understood.

If I recall correct this is where Elayne's article discusses "fancy pleasure."

And this is related I think to DeWitt's discussion of the "unity of pleasure." All pleasure is unified in that it "feels pleasurable" which is what makes it pleasure. With such a sweeping definition there is no room for some kind of "special pleasure" which is so uniquely the best that it is of a different type than the rest of pleasure.

Again, the unifying characteristic of all pleasure (and in fact the only common characteristic that describes all pleasures) is that it "feels good." So to repeat there's no unique experience of painlessness that has a feeling of it's on. Also on this point is the Wenham article, which focuses on pleasure as an "experience." So it is obvious and saying nothing new to say that pleasure is best experienced without interruptions, and without pain.

Post by “Charles” of January 14, 2020 at 7:03 PM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

Would you mean the definitions of both pleasure and pain or the differences between pleasure and happiness?

I'm referring to the multiple Epicurean sources that say

"Pleasure is the absence of pain" and that "pleasure is a feeling when desires are satisfied" (ie a more hedonistic pleasure)

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 7:05 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

I believe the Stoics are looking for Eudaimonia, Ataraxia is much more Epicurean.

I agree Charles, although I think what we're really saying is what words are associated with those schools today. Eudaimonia definitely sounds Aristotelian today (as does "flourishing"), and ataraxia is alleged to be Epicurean, but I perceived there's lots of crossover. And come to think of it I am not sure WHAT word is associated with Stoicism other than words maybe like glory that refer to their goal of virtue.

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 7:14 PM

Mike on this issue of ataraxia as the alleged highest pleasure I have summarized my research into the cites in THIS article: [The Full Cup / Fullness of Pleasure Model](#)

I have accumulated the cites that I have found that make clear that Epicurus was referring to pleasure in the same way we ordinarily understand that word, and I also point to links to the works of Plato which I believe explain why Epicurus developed the absence of pain terminology, as a means of logical refutation of the Platonic argument that pleasure cannot be the goal of life because pleasure allegedly is insatiable (has no limit): [The Full Cup / Fullness of Pleasure Model](#)

Several of the most clear text cites are this from Epicurus himself:

"It is observed too that in his treatise On the Ethical End he writes in these terms : "I know not how to conceive the good, apart from the pleasures of taste, of sex, of sound, and the pleasures of beautiful form."

- Diogenes Laertius, Book X

and this from Torquatus, which makes clear that the best life is one surrounded by numerous and vivid pleasures:

The truth of the position that pleasure is the ultimate good will most readily appear from the following illustration. Let us imagine a man living in the continuous enjoyment of numerous and vivid pleasures alike of body and of mind, undisturbed either by the presence or by the prospect of pain: what possible state of existence could we describe as being more excellent or more desirable? One so situated must possess in the first place a strength of mind that is proof against all fear of death or of pain; he will know that death means complete unconsciousness,

and that pain is generally light if long and short if strong, so that its intensity is compensated by brief duration and its continuance by diminishing severity. Let such a man moreover have no dread of any supernatural power; let him never suffer the pleasures of the past to fade away, but constantly renew their enjoyment in recollection, and his lot will be one which will not admit of further improvement.

and this from Cicero himself, which shows how you can easily and logically link tranquility to ordinary vivid pleasures without any contradiction:

Cicero, *In defense of Publius Sestius*, 10.23: “He {Publius Clodius} praised those most who are said to be above all others the teachers and eulogists of pleasure {the Epicureans}. ... He added that these same men were quite right in saying that the wise do everything for their own interests; that no sane man should engage in public affairs; that nothing was preferable to a life of tranquility crammed full of pleasures.

Post by “Charles” of January 14, 2020 at 7:20 PM

Quick question [Cassius](#)

Why is it that we often cite Cicero? He was a Stoic and he absolutely loathed the Epicureans to no end. Is it because he wrote against them so prolifically? Or is it instead that in his refutations he presented the original ideas and opinions of the Epicureans that have otherwise been lost to history?

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 7:27 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

Or is it instead that in his refutations he presented the original ideas and opinions of the Epicureans that have otherwise been lost to history?

I think the answer is almost exclusively this aspect - he is the best source for otherwise unpreserved material. We know also that Cicero was very good friends with Atticus, who was a very strong Epicurean, so I think it is fair to say that Cicero had some degree of restraint on him that he could not misrepresent Epicurus too strongly lest he lose credibility with Atticus and

others of his friends, as Epicurus was very popular then.

Also Charles I highly recommend reading the full book of "On Ends." I think it is pretty well documented and accepted by the experts that Cicero was not himself a Stoic, but in fact a neo-Platonist, and he disliked Stoicism almost as much as Epicurus. And as much or more of "On Ends" is devoted to refuting the Stoics than to the Epicureans. In fact I think you will find that Cicero's anti-Stoic argument is probably at least as intense, and perhaps even more vicious (and effective), than his anti-Epicurean argument.

Cicero was a smart guy and probably quoting directly from Epicurean texts in order to make his compilation work manageable. But you are correct he was very anti-Epicurean so that slant has to be kept in mind.

And yes other than Lucretius, the Torquatus narrative in On Ends, and the Velleius narrative in "On the Nature of the Gods, are the most extensive surviving texts on Epicurean positions other than the letters of Epicurus in Diogenes Laertius, and the wall of Diogenes of Oinoanda, which has not been as accessible over the centuries as has been the work of Cicero, which has possibly been more accessible even than Diogenes Laertius.

Which to some extent explains how this part of On Ends is now preserved as the Lorem Ipsum filler text.

Post by "Mike Anyayahan" of January 14, 2020 at 8:29 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

An illustration I would give would be applicable to any pleasure, but let's just choose "dancing." The best way to experience dancing would be not to be distracted from dancing (don't fall, don't bump into others, don't get called away to do something else) and without any pain mixed in (don't be distracted thinking about painful thoughts) while you are dancing.

This makes more sense to me now. I know that pleasure is produced by the absence of pain as what I already discussed lately in the other thread. Now, at that very state of tranquility right before the production of pleasure, there is surely no pleasure yet but a plain painlessness, and it's strange to say that painlessness means pleasure. I think that pleasure begins when you start enjoying a particular desire that has no more corresponding pain like your example of dancing. I want to dance because it's fun, but it is only fun if I do not encounter distractions. Otherwise, it's not pure dancing. And if I die, I will never be happy even if there is no more pain at all. The painlessness of death will not provide me with happiness since I am already devoid

of sensation. Therefore, pleasure (and happiness) is not simply produced by the absence of pain but out of a particular desire that demands no pain at all.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 8:30 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

"Pleasure is the absence of pain" and that "pleasure is a feeling when desires are satisfied" (ie a more hedonistic pleasure)

I think my comment just above is the appropriate reply for this.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 8:53 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

Why is it that we often cite Cicero? He was a Stoic and he absolutely loathed the Epicureans to no end. Is it because he wrote against them so prolifically? Or is it instead that in his refutations he presented the original ideas and opinions of the Epicureans that have otherwise been lost to history?

Cicero is a Skeptic (skeptical). I don't know how others view him, but I used to be a skeptic, and I modeled my skepticism partly from him and partly from Socrates. When I was a skeptic, I was honest to myself when presenting an opposing view. I presented it as correctly as possible so I could find the most appropriate rebuttal. I wouldn't fake myself with untrue negation of an untrue position since my aim was also tranquility by suspending my judgment. When I would present an opposing position, I would make sure I understood it correctly so that my criticism would be valid.

I am sure Cicero had the same attitude. I am confident that he presented Epicurean philosophy correctly in the character of Torquatus. I can't find any reason for Cicero to fake the Roman public since he is not a Sophist. Therefore, the Book 1 in which Torquatus presents Epicurean philosophy on behalf of Epicureans can be considered authoritative.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 8:57 PM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

Therefore, pleasure (and happiness) is not simply produced by the absence of pain but out of a particular desire that demands no pain at all.

Mike I can see why you would say "no pain" because of the point that the two feelings are separate and distinct. But in terms of 'demanding no pain at all' you would also keep in mind that we sometimes choose pain in order to produce pleasure, so while they are not the same feeling, a pleasure that is purchased at the cost of a particular pain might be a pleasure that we would choose, despite the cost in pain, would it not?

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 9:02 PM

The metaphor that makes the most sense to me is the filling of a vessel, for example with a liquid. You fill the tank of your car with gasoline, and in doing so the air is expelled. The maximum that the tank can hold is when all the air is expelled. This is the point of maximum gasoline, and minimum air. But the nature of the gasoline is not changed when it reaches the maximum point of being filled.

Thus so, a life of pleasure has reached its height when it is filled with the experience of ordinary pleasures, of whatever type, and when the experience of your life has no further component of pain.

But there is nothing magic about the expelling of the last ounce of pain. The dancing and eating and drinking and appreciation of art and thinking and friends etc is just the same at the point of maximum pleasure as it is all along the way in the course of being filled -- the only difference is at the point of maximum pleasure there is no longer any distraction whatsoever from pain or turbulence.

in Cicero's words, nothing is better than a life of tranquility, crammed full of pleasures. That is the description of the moment when the person's experiences nothing but pleasures, and nothing can be better than that because the feeling - the experience - of the person is completely consumed with pleasures, and there is no room left -- no ability to experience anything else - beyond that.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 9:05 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Mike I can see why you would say "no pain" because of the point that the two feelings are separate and distinct. But in terms of 'demanding no pain at all' you would also keep in mind that we sometimes choose pain in order to produce pleasure, so while they are not the same feeling, a pleasure that is purchased at the cost of a particular pain might be a pleasure that we would choose, despite the cost in pain, would it not?

Yes. We choose pain (and skip some immediate pleasures) to achieve greater pleasure. I am referring to static pleasure that is produced by the absence of pain. If the absence of pain is the only definition of pleasure, then the stoic ataraxia must be pleasure, too. And I don't think they will agree in that case. Just like my example before, my stomach pain will not be painless at the same time, yet, when it is no longer painful, it does not mean pleasure because that state of painlessness must be different from pleasure as well. If my stomach is not any more painful, the pleasure there is when I enjoy walking which I couldn't do when I was in pain.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 9:19 PM

Mike I will be interested in your comments if / when you are able to read the [Nikolsky](#) article, and the section of Gosling and Taylor on katestematic pleasure, and the Wenham article...

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

I am referring to static pleasure that is produced by the absence of pain.

... because i am not at all sure that such as think as this exists. If there is a change in state, as in removal of pain, then there is some action going on that explains the source of the pleasure. I do not believe that "absence of pain" alone is an activity, any more than "calmly" expresses an activity. As per the argument in these articles, especailly Wenham perhaps on this particular point, all pleasure comes through sensation, and absence of sensation is death. If you are sensing pleasure, you are sensing "something" -- even if your mind is merely contemplating, which you find enjoyable. The pleasure in that moment is from your mind contemplating, a positive action, not an "absence of" anything. i think it ends up being a non-sequitur, and essentially a sophisticated attack on the feeling of pleasure itself, to talk in terms of "absence of" as describing the positive experience of pleasure.

That's why this entire issue of katastematic pleasure is so important, and why [Nikolsky](#) and Gosling and Taylor and Wenham write to refute it. As [Nikolsky](#) state most explicitly, the entire issue of "static pleasure" was likely invented by a later stoic (Carneades) as part of their categorization obsession, and it seems to me very likely that Epicurus would have rejected the classification if he himself had been asked about it.

But this is a deep subject where you need to expose yourself to the arguments that are stated in much more detail in these articles than I can do. If you have the time, I recommend [Nikolsky](#) first, then the Gosling and Taylor article (by which [Nikolsky](#) was inspired to write his) then followed by Wenham.

Post by "Cassius" of January 14, 2020 at 9:27 PM

It's probably worth pasting here the summary from [the Nikolsky article](#):

Epicurus on Pleasure

Author(s): Boris Nikolsky

Source:

Phronesis,

Vol. 46, No. 4 (Nov., 2001), pp. 440-465

Epicurus On Pleasure

BORIS NIKOLSKY

ABSTRACT

The paper deals with the question of the attribution to Epicurus of the classification of pleasures into 'kinetic' and 'static'. This classification, usually regarded as authentic, confronts us with a number of problems and contradictions. Besides, it is only mentioned in a few sources that are not the most reliable. Following Gosling and Taylor, I believe that the authenticity of the classification may be called in question.

The analysis of the ancient evidence concerning Epicurus' concept of pleasure is made according to the following principle: first, I consider the sources that do not mention the distinction between 'kinetic' and 'static' pleasures, and only then do I compare them with the other group of texts which comprises reports by Cicero, Diogenes Laertius and Athenaeus. From the former group of texts there emerges a concept of pleasure as a single and not twofold notion, while such terms as 'motion' and 'state' describe not two different phenomena but only two characteristics of the same phenomenon. On the other hand, the reports comprising the latter group appear to derive from one and the same doxographical tradition, and to be connected with the classification of ethical doctrines put forward by the Middle Academy and known as the *divisio Carneadea*. In conclusion, I argue that the idea of Epicurus' classification of pleasures is based on a misinterpretation of Epicurus' concept in Academic doxography, which tended to contrapose it to doctrines of other schools, above all to the Cyrenaics' views.

Practically every modern survey of the Epicurean conception of pleasure begins by saying that Epicurus' concept of pleasure was twofold: in the opinion of researchers, Epicurus distinguished two kinds of pleasure – a 'static' pleasure or a pleasure 'in a state of rest' and a 'kinetic' pleasure or a pleasure 'in motion.' We know about this division mainly from one text – the first two books of Cicero's dialogue *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*. In Book 1 of this work¹ one of its characters, an Epicurean by the name of Lucius Torquatus, gives a definition of two different kinds of pleasure, one of which *suavitate aliqua naturam ipsam movet et iucunditate quadam percipitur sensibus*, thus being a pleasure 'in motion,'² while

Post by "Mike Anyayahan" of January 14, 2020 at 9:28 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

... because i am not at all sure that such as think as this exists. If there is a change in state, as in removal of pain, then there is some action going on that explains the source of the pleasure. I do not believe that "absence of pain" alone is an activity, any more than "calmly" expresses an activity. As per the argument in these articles, especailly Wenham perhaps on this particular point, all pleasure comes through sensation, and absence of sensation is death. If you are sensing pleasure, you are sensing "something" -- even if your mind is merely contemplating, which you find enjoyable. i think it ends up being a non-sequitur, and essentially on the feeling of pleasure itself, to talk in terms of "absence of" as describing the positive experience of pleasure.

That's why this entire issue of katastematic pleasure is so important, and why [Nikolsky](#) and gosling and taylor and Wenham write to refute it. As [Nikolsky](#) state most explicitly, the entire issue of "stastic pleasure" was likely invented by a later stoic as part of their categorization obsession, and it seems to me very likely that Epicurus would have rejected the classification if he himself had been asked about it.

I agree. I don't believe in anything static as well. But for the sake of analysis, we can't help using the term since it is how we state pleasure that is not kinetic or moving. But anyways, my point is that pain and painlessness can not exist at the same place at the same moment the way the absence of pain and pleasure can not exist at the same place and at the same moment, too.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 9:46 PM

Yes I am convinced that is the main point Mike. I know we are hitting you with a lot of material in terms of the DeWitt book and now these other articles such as [Nikolsky](#), and I presume you have a life outside this philosophy work, plus you have to worry about a volcano!

But over time I hope you will keep an eye on this particular issue. It's something we are going to face with every new person who comes down the road, because the mainline summaries of Epicurus are so focused on this point. It is the strategy they use to back up their argument that Epicurus was not REALLY a hedonist after all, because what he really advocated was this "fancy pleasure" which really isn't pleasure as ordinary people understand it at all.

DeWitt actually does not deal with it a lot, primarily i think because - since he was so systematic in approaching first through the physics and the epistemology - he wasn't sidetracked on something that would never occur to a "normal person" to be an issue. When you are grounded first in the natural order of things, that pleasure guides all life, as illustrated in the opening of Lucretius, the person of common understanding would never naturally go off into exploring some ineffable "nothingness" as a legitimate form of pleasure, and certainly not the "highest pleasure."

But the seeds of this argument were planted centuries ago, at least as far back as Cicero, and now it is the standard way used to explain what Epicurus was supposedly all about. The ancient Stoics and Epicureans didn't think that way, because they fought to the end, but the argument has gained a lot of steam in more recent centuries because Stoicism has achieved such a sweeping victory that people are afraid of emotion, afraid of pleasure, and do all they can to explain the viewpoint away. Such things are good enough to be the guide of all OTHER forms of life, but not humans -- no not humans! -- because we are the "rational animal" and we are "better" than that! (I am being sarcastic, of course)

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 9:52 PM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

I agree. I don't believe in anything static as well.

And one reason that Epicurus himself wouldn't believe in anything static either is that one of the very first and most fundamental principles of his physics is that the atoms (and therefore everything, ultimately) is constantly in motion, and NOTHING is ever actually "static."

That's the kind of observation deriving from physics that I am convinced shows how the ancient Epicureans would never have accepted such an argument. They were grounded, like Lucretius, from the beginning in the study of nature, and of atomism, and thus once they were taught that nothing exists for long periods of time without resolving back into their originating atoms, which are constantly in motion, the idea that there was something important that could be "static" in the sense of unmoving and unchanging would simply be "inconceivable."

While, on the other hand, the notion of something as "static" perfectly fits the Platonic/Stoic notions of an unchanging "god" and his realm of "virtue" and similar ideals.

"Static" has "Stoic" written all over it 😊

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 9:52 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

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But over time I hope you will keep an eye on this particular issue. It's something we are going to face with every new person who comes down the road, because the mainline summaries of Epicurus are so focused on this point -- it is the strategy they use to back up their argument that Epicurus was not REALLY a hedonist after all, because what he really advocated was this "fancy pleasure" which really isn't pleasure as ordinary people understand it at all.

Lol. Volcano is nothing to fear. 😊 Yes. I know that Epicurus is hedonistic. I don't think he promotes Taoism or Zen Buddhism. This is why my strong argument is that death will guarantee the removal of all pains, but it will never provide us any pleasure.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 9:55 PM

And Epicurus wouldn't tell us to live with pleasure if only the removal of pain is the end.

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 10:00 PM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

And Epicurus wouldn't tell us to live with pleasure if only the removal of pain is the end.

I could not have said it better myself! 😊

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 10:00 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

-- because we are the "rational animal" and we are "better" than that! (I am being sarcastic, of course)

Yes. Epicurus has made it clear when he expressed repeatedly across his works that we should live a prudent life. Prudence is impossible without reason.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 10:04 PM

But abstract general reasoning is no prudence at all. It's a different animal. 🤪

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 10:06 PM

Yes, in my sarcasm I am referring to Cicero stating that the philosophy of Epicurus is better suited to an animal than a human. That's a cite I don't recall to mind readily enough, but I will eventually find it and paste it here. Possibly from On Ends but perhaps Tusculan Disputations (or maybe even another work)

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 10:11 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Cicero stating that the philosophy of Epicurus is better suited to an animal than a human.

Lol. Nietzsche would surely tell him the opposite. I guess he would say that a Platonic reasoning is indeed for animals or for humans with herd mentality. 😂

Post by “Cassius” of January 14, 2020 at 10:14 PM

Found them! I have several and will post them here in this post as I find them:

Cicero, *Fin.* 2.109

Quare aliud aliquod, Torquate, hominis summum bonum reperiendum est, voluptatem bestiis concedamus.

Therefore, Torquatus, some other supreme good must be found for a human being. Let us leave pleasure to the nonhuman animals.

Cicero, *Fin.* 2.111

Nec tamen ullo modo summum pecudis bonum et hominis idem mihi videri potest.

I cannot in any way think that humans and livestock have the same supreme good.

Aristotle, *EN* 1.5 1095b19-20 (Cf. Heraclitus *fr.* 4 and 29, and Plato, *Rep.* 586a-b)

οἱ μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ παντελῶς ἀνθραποδῶδεις φαίνονται βοσκημάτων βίον προαιρούμενοι...

Most entirely slavish people clearly choose the life of cattle...

Cicero, *Fin.* 2.69, trans. Woolf

lubebat eos qui audiebant secum ipsos cogitare pictam in tabula Voluptatem pulcherrimo vestitu et ornatu regali in solio sedentem; praesto esse Virtutes ut ancillulas, quae nihil aliud agerent, nullum suum officium ducerent nisi ut Voluptati ministrarent et eam tantum ad aurem admonerent (si modo id pictura intellegi posset) ut caveret ne quid faceret imprudens quod offenderet animos hominum, aut quicquam e quo oriretur aliquis dolor. "Nos quidem Virtutes sic natae sumus ut tibi serviremus, aliud negoti nihil habemus."

He [viz., Cleanthes] would ask the audience to imagine a painting of Pleasure, decked out in gorgeous regal attire, sitting on a throne. By her side are the Virtues, depicted as servants who consider that their whole duty and function is to minister to Pleasure and whisper her warnings (if this can be conveyed pictorially) to take care not to do anything unwittingly which might offend public opinion, or bring her pain in any way. "We Virtues," they cry, "were born to serve you. We have no other business."

T13 Cicero, *Fin.* 2.33

Bestiarum vero nullum iudicium puto. Quamvis enim depravatae non sint, pravae tamen esse possunt. Ut bacillum aliud est inflexum et incurvatum de industria, aliud ita natum, sic ferarum natura non est illa quidem depravata mala disciplina, sed natura sua.

In truth, I think nothing of the judgment of nonhuman animals. For although they may not have been corrupted, still they can be corrupt. Just as one stick is bent and distorted intentionally and another has grown that way, so the nature of wild animals is not that way because it is corrupted by bad training, but by its own nature.

Cicero, *Fin.* 2.40

Hi non viderunt, ut ad cursum equum, ad arandum bovem, ad indagandum canem, sic hominem ad duas res, ut ait Aristoteles, ad intellegendum et <ad> agendum esse natum quasi mortalem deum, contraque ut tardam aliquam et languidam pecudem ad pastum et ad procreandi voluptatem hoc divinum animal ortum esse voluerunt, quo nihil mihi videtur absurdus.

They [viz., Aristippus and the Cyrenaics] did not see that just as a horse is born for running, an ox for ploughing, and a dog for hunting, so a human is born for two things, as Aristotle says, for thinking and for acting, as if a mortal god. They, by contrast, wanted this divine animal to be born for grazing and the pleasure of procreating, like a slow and lazy sheep. Nothing seems to me more absurd than this.

Cicero, *Fin.* 2.45-47

Homines enim, etsi aliis multis, tamen hoc uno plurimum a bestiis differunt quod rationem habent a natura datam mentemque acrem et vigentem celerrimeque multa simul agitantem...
Even if humans differ from nonhuman animals in many other ways, they differ most in this one way, that they are endowed by nature with reason and with a sharp and vigorous intellect that does many things simultaneously and very swiftly...

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 14, 2020 at 10:25 PM

Cicero's comment presupposes that pleasure is irrational which is contrary to what Torquatus explains about the use of virtue for pleasure. I think it is just an argumentative device he made in order to insert the popular notion of pleasure as against that of Epicureans. Cicero loves teasing for an argument to come out as opposed to Socrates who loves interrogation.

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2020 at 4:11 AM

Well, we certainly can and should use reason to achieve pleasure, and we can take pleasure in our reasoning, but in fact pleasure itself IS irrational, is it not? And Epicurus' lowering of the "rank" of reason, and not including it in the canon of truth, is indication of the secondary place "reason" holds in the Epicurean estimation.

Post by “Hiram” of January 15, 2020 at 9:59 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Yes that (the focus on tranquility / ataraxia / peace of mind as some unique kind of highest pleasure) is a common assertion that I reject, Mike, and I think you will find that Dewitt states it considerably differently. In fact I do not believe that either ataraxia or aponia are "kinds of pleasure." I believe they are adverbs that describe ways / contexts in which pleasure (ordinary pleasures of all kind) are experienced. In other words, the best way to experience any pleasure is "without distraction" (ataraxia) and "without pain" (aponia).

For the record, this is Cassius' view and is not shared by all. The sources that use ataraxia include Letter to Menoecus:

Quote

The steady contemplation of these facts enables you to understand everything that you accept or reject in terms of the health of the body and the serenity of the soul — since that is the goal of a completely happy life.

τούτων γὰρ ἀπλανῆς θεωρία πᾶσαν αἴρεσιν καὶ φυγὴν ἐπανάγειν οἶδεν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὑγίειαν καὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς **ἀταραξίαν**, ἐπεὶ τοῦτο τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν ἐστι τέλος

(where ἀταραξίαν/ataraxian is translated as "serenity of the soul"). And so this term is used in LMenoeceus by Epicurus, where it is offered as a criterion for choices and avoidances.

Also, in Diogenes' Wall, we find this, where we are able to contrast ataraxia versus the ills of the soul that it's meant to heal: the perturbances of the soul:

<https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/2017/03/25/dio...-the-pleasures/>

Quote

Let us now [investigate] how life is to be made pleasant for us both in states and in actions.

Let us first discuss states, keeping an eye on the point that, **when the emotions which disturb the soul are removed, those which produce pleasure enter into it to take their place.**

Well, what are the disturbing emotions? [They are] fears —of the gods, of death, and of [pains]— and, besides [these], desires that [outrun] the limits fixed by nature. **These are the roots of all evils, and, [unless] we cut them off, [a multitude] of evils will grow [upon] us.**

Post by “Hiram” of January 15, 2020 at 10:06 AM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

I am referring to static pleasure that is produced by the absence of pain. .

This has been discussed before:

Dialogue on Katastematic Pleasure

<http://societyofepicurus.com/dialogue-on-katastematic-pleasure/>

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2020 at 10:06 AM

[Quote from Hiram](#)

For the record, this is Cassius' view and is not shared by all. The sources that use ataraxia include Letter to Menoecus:

There is no doubt that the term ataraxia is used occasionally and in certain contexts; that is not the issue. The issue is whether we should draw the conclusion that "ataraxia" is correctly identified as equivalent to a specific type of pleasure, or as a unique "highest pleasure," which I contend is not the case, nor do those cites establish that point. The goal of life stated over and

over again by Epicurus and others is pleasure, not "ataraxia." Pleasure is the overriding ultimate term, ataraxia is a subordinate concept just like aponia.

This is true even in the letter to Menoeceus - all of these references here are to "pleasure," not to "ataraxia":

"And for this cause we call pleasure the beginning and end of the blessed life. For we recognize pleasure as the first good innate in us, and from pleasure we begin every act of choice and avoidance, and to pleasure we return again, using the feeling as the standard by which we judge every good. And since pleasure is the first good and natural to us, for this very reason we do not choose every pleasure, but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them: and similarly we think many pains better than pleasures, since a greater pleasure comes to us when we have endured pains for a long time. Every pleasure then because of its natural kinship to us is good, yet not every pleasure is to be chosen: even as every pain also is an evil, yet not all are always of a nature to be avoided."

Post by "Cassius" of January 15, 2020 at 10:12 AM

So Hiram, do you contend that "ataraxia" was the goal of life for Epicurus rather than pleasure?

Post by "Hiram" of January 15, 2020 at 10:22 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

There is no doubt that the term ataraxia is used occasionally and in certain contexts; that is not the issue. The issue is whether we should draw the conclusion that "ataraxia" is correctly identified as equivalent to a specific type of pleasure, or as a unique "highest pleasure," which I contend is not the case, nor do those cites establish that point. The goal of life stated over and over again by Epicurus and others is pleasure, not "ataraxia." Pleasure is the overriding ultimate term, ataraxia is a subordinate concept.

Correct, the end of the calculus of pleasure vs. pain is net pleasure. But we should not dismiss ataraxia itself for this reason.

As for "higher pleasure", the closest thing to that is in Diogenes of Oenoanda, where we find the argument that pleasures and pains of the mind are more intense and of longer duration than those of the body - <https://theautarkist.wordpress.com/2017/03/31/dio...al-doctrine-20/>

Putting aside the telos, Ataraxia and aponia are themselves important criteria when it comes to carrying out choices and avoidances, says LMenoeceus. We must refer our choices and avoidances to them. This is in line with Metrodorus' teaching that we should acquire the confident expectation that we will be able to secure our natural and necessary desires (if we worry about where our next meal will come from, or where we are going to sleep, we can't live pleasantly). We study nature to avoid perturbations (the -tarax- portion of ataraxia) about natural phenomena, etc.

Post by "Hiram" of January 15, 2020 at 10:23 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So Hiram, do you contend that "ataraxia" was the goal of life for Epicurus rather than pleasure?

No. But I do contend that in the sources, nowhere is this being said. To speak of ataraxia does not constitute its replacement instead of pleasure. I contend that ataraxia is an important part of the anatomy of pleasure, as understood by the Epicureans, and that it's hard to connect theory with practice without it.

Post by "Cassius" of January 15, 2020 at 10:29 AM

No one is saying that absence of pain or absence of disturbance are irrelevant. The issue is the clear, correct, and well-articulated identity of the goal of life to avoid confusion for those who study Epicurus:

*I will start then in the manner approved by the author of the system himself, by settling what are the essence and qualities of the thing that is the object of our inquiry; not that I suppose you to be ignorant of it, but because this is the logical method of procedure. **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. This he sets out to prove as follows: Every animal, as soon as it is born, seeks for pleasure, and delights in it as the Chief Good, while it recoils from pain as the Chief Evil, and so far as possible avoids it. This it does as long as it remains unperverted, at the prompting of Nature's own unbiased and honest verdict.

So to be clear, Hiram, you agree that "**pleasure**," and not "**ataraxia**," is the goal of life articulated by Epicurus?

Post by "Hiram" of January 15, 2020 at 10:37 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

So to be clear, Hiram, you agree that "**pleasure**," and not "**ataraxia**," is the goal of life articulated by Epicurus?

Correct, pleasure is the end.

That ataraxia is the end has never been stated by anyone in Epicurean philosophy 😊
"Pleasure is the end".

But as someone who has embraced the idea of the teaching mission of the Epicurean Gardens, I don't think it's healthy to shun the word "ataraxia" without, later, re-visiting the word within its proper context and with its proper proportion and place in the doctrine. If we dismiss ataraxia without discussing what it is and what its role is, that does not serve the teaching mission.

Yes pleasure is the end, but how do we go about living pleasantly in the real, contextual, complicated reality that we inhabit? To dismiss ataraxia is to impede our teaching from being contextualized and lived. Right now the world is being shaken by earthquakes and volcanoes (Puerto Rico, Indonesia, Philippines, New York, Delaware, and now Alaska) and there are priests everywhere inviting people to get on their knees and turn themselves over to a deity that is imagined as a cosmic Saddam Hussein. You can't live pleasantly if you don't study nature enough to understand that this is unnecessary. So ataraxia, the demeanor and disposition of someone who is without apprehensions about natural phenomena, someone who is confident to get the natural and necessary goods, is necessary to live pleasantly. THIS TOO is part of the doctrine, and without it you can't connect theory and practice as an Epicurean.

Post by "Cassius" of January 15, 2020 at 11:04 AM

[Quote from Hiram](#)

If we dismiss ataraxia without discussing what it is and what its role is, that does not serve the teaching mission.

I agree that we cannot dismiss ataraxia and leave it alone, because 98% of people studying Epicurus are confusing it for the end, and we must disabuse them of that notion if they are to understand that the goal is pleasure and not something else.

[Quote from Hiram](#)

To dismiss ataraxia is to impede our teaching from being contextualized and lived.

I would say this differently, and would say that "ataraxia as it is generally understood" is what impedes teaching Epicurus correctly as properly contextualized and lived.

[Quote from Hiram](#)

You can't live pleasantly if you don't study nature enough to understand that this is unnecessary. So ataraxia, the demeanor and disposition of someone who is without apprehensions about natural phenomena

This is an example of the problem. You are talking about ataraxia as if it is somehow outside the framework of pleasure as the goal. It is INSIDE the framework, and pleasure is not a threat to ataraxia properly understood. By backing away from pleasure you are implying that the framework is not solid and needs reworking.

Post by "Cassius" of January 15, 2020 at 11:08 AM

[Quote from Oscar](#)

We humans are animals (apparently this truth makes Texans especially uncomfortable). But it's also true that we humans are unique, in many respects, relative to the rest of life -- for the better and for the worse!

I was thinking about this very point earlier today. Once again I think precision is key. If by "unique" would be meant some kind of bright dividing line by which humans are of a different

essential nature, or that humans have some kind of divine spark that ants (for example) do not, then I think that would be incorrect. I think the proper view would be that life exists on a spectrum, with humans occupying the most sophisticated intellectual role that we are currently aware of, but that there is no chasm/bright line/ difference in nature between humans and higher animals, all of which are on the same spectrum of "life." What do you think of that way of phrasing it?

The idea that humans are of some kind of unique higher nature that makes it cosmically special is inherent in Cicero's argument, and I think that argument must be held to fail.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 15, 2020 at 11:15 AM

I am beginning to see that pleasure and happiness are two different things, and it seems that happiness is a somewhat remote state as compared to mental pleasure. It appears to me that happiness is a circumstance while pleasure is a kind of feeling. Torquatus said that the greatest pleasure of the mind is a contributor to happiness. This implies a connection of two different things.

In the last paragraph of part XVII of Book 1 of On Ends, Torquatus said "This is now entirely evident, that the very greatest pleasure or annoyance of the mind contributes more to making life happy or miserable..."

And with regard to my previous comment that the absence of pain does not necessarily mean pleasure, Torquatus has the same explanation when he said in the same paragraph that "...we affirm that men do rejoice at getting rid of pain even if no pleasure, which can affect the senses, succeeds."

In other words, pleasure and happiness are not the same thing while pleasure and the absence of pain are two different states as well.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 15, 2020 at 11:24 AM

[Quote from Oscar](#)

Mike, I think you are spot on with differentiating the two. I would add that it is possible that we'll understand how the mind (our brain) undergoes pleasure and I think the

absence of pain isn't the full story. We are hungry, so we eat, and then we are satiated. IMO, pleasure can start by thinking about what you want to eat and with whom you want to dine with.

Yes. That's exactly the point. Like what I argued yesterday here, death will guarantee the removal of all pains, but it will never give us pleasure since the dead are already devoid of sensation, hence they could never want or be satisfied.

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2020 at 11:31 AM

[Quote from Oscar](#)

actually, on second thought, a rocking chair can probably induce ataraxia, no need to wait 😊

That's mostly a joke more than a precise philosophical statement but I "liked" it anyway 😊
Jokes are good! 😊

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

In other words, pleasure and happiness are not the same thing while pleasure and the absence of pain are two different states as well.

I agree that these words are not describing identical things. Whether one or more of them is a "state" however may be a different question 😊

[Quote from Oscar](#)

I don't view life along a spectrum or continuum and I caution anyone against that notion, because such notions impeded the development of biology for millennia; formally known as the chain of being.

Maybe it would be helpful to explain that statement. All I meant by being on a spectrum is the lack of a bright line difference that distinguishes them into some kind of ideal categories, so I presume you are making another point(?)

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 15, 2020 at 11:41 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Whether one or more of them is a "state" however may be a different question 😊

Again, like what I mentioned to you yesterday, I do not believe in anything static or a certain kind of state. We just can't help using the term for the sake of analysis. The fact that the absence of pain produces pleasure simply explains they are different from each other. When I produce a meal, the meal is not me. 😊

Post by "Cassius" of January 15, 2020 at 1:43 PM

[Quote from Oscar](#)

Can you clarify the difference between happiness and pleasure.

That is exactly the point under discussion and it is not easy. What is clear is that (1) Epicurus stated that "pleasure" (using hedone or other Greek words) is the goal, not "happiness" (eudaimonia). Perhaps we should ask the Greeks what the difference is 😊 For now, the main point for philosophical discussion is that pleasure is a feeling, and happiness would be desirable because it is a type of pleasurable feeling, otherwise happiness would not be desirable. I do not think it would be appropriate to do the reverse, and describe pleasure as a type of happiness feeling. Nor would it be appropriate to attempt to define happiness as an abstraction which is the single goal of everyone's life, as Aristotle tried to do by defining precise requirements for happiness. Nature gave us only feelings to help us determine how to choose and to avoid, and did not define particular goals or give faculties other than pleasure and pain.

[Quote from Oscar](#)

It seems a lot of people are seeking happiness, how would you convince them that happiness is not the goal of life, that pleasure is the ultimate goal/chief good in life?

Same answer as above, for the moment: Pleasure is a feeling, and happiness would be desirable because it is a type of pleasurable feeling, otherwise happiness would not be desirable. I do not think it would be appropriate to do the reverse, and describe pleasure as a type of happiness feeling. Nor would it be appropriate to attempt to define happiness as an abstraction which is the single goal of everyone's life, as Aristotle tried to do by defining precise requirements for happiness.

Nature gave us only feelings to help us determine how to choose and to avoid, and did not define particular goals or give faculties other than pleasure and pain.

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2020 at 2:08 PM

"For now, the main point for philosophical discussion is that pleasure is a feeling, and happiness would be desirable because it is a type of pleasurable feeling, otherwise happiness would not be desirable."

To extend this further, it clearly incorrect to say "happiness is not a subset of pleasure, but happiness is desirable in and of itself," because that would create the logical dilemma of there being something other than pleasure which is desirable. That conclusion cannot be true because it is ruled out by the foundational premise that Nature gives us only two feelings by which to choose and avoid, pleasure and pain, of which only the feeling of pleasure is desirable in and of itself.

To say that happiness is not pleasure but is desirable in and of itself would be no different than making that claim about wisdom or friendship or courage or prudence or anything else. All of those are desirable only because (and if) they bring pleasure.

There is no doubt here but that we are working with logical constructions, and that we have to deal with all the hazards that that entails. Some might say that we are playing word games. But that is where DeWitt's observation that Epicurus is the ultimate anti-Platonist comes into play. We can choose to ignore the Platonist logicians and tell them just to go jump in a lake, or we can beat them at their own game and show them that logic can be used to identify accurately the goal of life (as opposed to gods, or virtue, ideals, or rationality itself). It seems to me that since he was teacher in Athens surrounded by logicians of all stripes, Epicurus felt it prudent to equip his students with logical arguments with which to fight off the Platonists. And that reasoning seems to me to be compelling today, since so many people find so many reasons to shrink back from the word "pleasure."

So this appears to be the path in which Epicurus used logic to establish that the feeling of **pleasure**, rather than an abstraction such as Aristotle tried to do with "happiness/eudaimonia," is the correct answer and antidote to gods/virtue/idealism/rationalism.

Post by “Hiram” of January 15, 2020 at 2:48 PM

[Quote from Oscar](#)

[Cassius](#) you made an interesting point before that the modern usage and term for describing *happiness* wasn't in Epicurus' vocabulary. Eudaimonia, however, was around the time of Epicurus. Can you clarify the difference between happiness and pleasure.

It seems a lot of people are seeking happiness, how would you convince them that happiness is not the goal of life, that pleasure is the ultimate goal/chief good in life?

These discussions have one on for thousands of years among the Schools that follow pleasure ethics. In [the review of Lampe's book on the Cyrenaics](#), while discussing Aristippus, I delved into his matter (under the heading "Ethics"):

Quote

Lampe thinks that Cyrenaics are eudaimonics (believed in happiness as the end, not just pleasure), but most scholars disagree. It's likely that a variety of views existed within the school regarding the end. One of the key arguments for pleasure as the end in its inception had to do with how pleasure is not the same thing as happiness. Pleasure is an instance, happiness is a collection of pleasures, and as such happiness is therefore an abstraction, a platonized alternative to the real experience of pleasure. This argument is interesting, and still generates debate and various opinions today.

Post by “Elli” of January 15, 2020 at 2:52 PM

Greeks say on happiness and pleasure please, read again and again the work that was done by our epicurean friend [Elayne](#). Our lovely Doctor gave us already her prescription! 😎

[On Pain, Pleasure, and Happiness Second Draft](#)

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2020 at 3:19 PM

Hiram made the comment earlier today that it might be hard to explain to someone in the Phillipines facing a volcano that pleasure should be their concern.

How much harder would it be to explain to someone that they needed to lead an armed charge into an enemy line, or to order their own child to be killed for disobeying orders in that fight, all for the sake of pleasure? But that is exactly what Torquatus the Epicurean gave us as our example, and he is not ultimately arguing for absence of pain, but for pleasure, obtained by temporarily choosing to endure pain:

This being the theory I hold, why need I be afraid of not being able to reconcile it with the case of the Torquati my ancestors? Your references to them just now were historically correct, and also showed your kind and friendly feeling towards myself; but the same I am not to be bribed by your flattery of my family, and you will not find me a less resolute opponent. Tell me, pray, what explanation do you put upon their actions? Do you really believe that they charged an armed enemy, or treated their children, their own flesh and blood, so cruelly, without a thought for their own interest or advantage? Why, even wild animals do not act in that way; they do not run amok so blindly that we cannot discern any purpose in their movements and their onslaughts.

Can you then suppose that those heroic men performed their famous deeds without any motive at all? What their motive was, I will consider later on: for the present I will confidently assert, that if they had a motive for those undoubtedly glorious exploits, that motive was not a love of virtue in and for itself.—He wrested the necklet from his foe.—Yes, and saved himself from death. But he braved great danger.—Yes, before the eyes of an army.—What did he get by it?—Honor and esteem, the strongest guarantees of security in life.—He sentenced his own son to death.—If from no motive, I am sorry to be the descendant of anyone so savage and inhuman; but if his purpose was by inflicting pain upon himself to establish his authority as a commander, and to tighten the reins of discipline during a very serious war by holding over his army the fear of punishment, then his action aimed at ensuring the safety of his fellow citizens, upon which he knew his own depended.

And this is a principle of wide application. People of your school, and especially yourself, who are so diligent a student of history, have found a favourite field for the display of your eloquence in recalling the stories of brave and famous men of old, and in praising their actions, not on utilitarian grounds, but on account of the splendor of abstract moral worth. But all of this falls to the ground if the principle of selection that I have just mentioned be established,—the principle of forgoing pleasures for the purpose of getting greater pleasures, and enduring, pains for the sake of escaping greater pains.

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2020 at 3:21 PM

[Quote from Oscar](#)

I don't know that we have only two feelings, there's also a feeling of indifference -- unless one thinks indifference as not being a feeling at all?

I think that that is one of the basic premises of Epicurean analysis, established in both the letter to Herodotus and in Diogenes Laertius, and that if this principle is not accepted then we're outside the bounds of Epicurean argument. That is an argument that needs to be addressed but I will personally have to postpone it until later. Suffice it to say for the moment that I think it is reasonable to state that any feeling which we can experience, if we experience it, is either going to be felt as desirable or undesirable, and that that is what is meant by pleasure and pain.

Post by “Elayne” of January 15, 2020 at 3:55 PM

Oscar, our feelings are a response to the entire situation we are in. You said you were enjoying being at the game because of your friends-- that's pleasure.

Have you ever felt 100% neutral, absent pain or pleasure? I have not. Anhedonia, absence of pleasure, is uniformly a very miserable, painful experience, a symptom of several different mental illnesses. This idea of having neither pain nor pleasure is a myth, an abstraction, that doesn't happen in our biological reality. Feelings can be of low intensity, yes, but they are never completely gone.

Post by “Hiram” of January 15, 2020 at 4:30 PM

[Oscar](#) we've talked about this elsewhere, but so if you go back to Menoecus, Epicurus says that pleasure is our FIRST INNATE GOOD. Babies are born and no one has to teach them to shun pain and seek pleasure. **So based on the study of nature, Epicurus said, we can see that THIS is what we are naturally drawn to doing. The key is that we should not force nature, but to work with her (PD 20). Epicurus is a very gentle teacher. He doesn't think you should work against your nature, he thinks you should be authentic.**

Another way to think about this, if you don't like thinking of our ethics in terms of the goal, is to say that Pleasure is how we EXPERIENCE the good. Pain is how we EXPERIENCE evil. We are sentient beings, and a true and compassionate ethics

concerns itself with the immediate, direct experience of sentient beings.

Post by “Cassius” of January 15, 2020 at 5:37 PM

"Pleasure is how we EXPERIENCE the good. Pain is how we EXPERIENCE evil."

Does that formulation not imply that good and evil exist even if we do not experience it? I think that is likely untenable in Epicurean theory.

Post by “Elli” of January 16, 2020 at 7:05 AM

Eudaemonia is not an end itself. It is the feeling of the well mood that is intuitively engraved within the bodily structure of the molecular of DNA/RNA/ that exists in the inner self and springs from the inner self for being able enough to do the right measurement among pleasure and pain for leading that self along with others, like that self, to the positive goal that is pleasure. Eudaemonia is like a talent that someone is born with it and along with exercises/experiences of pleasures it is improved and improved. Thus, according to the science of evolution and natural selection, those who have eudaemonic bodily structures are those that are called the adaptable and are capable enough to be so ingenious to survive pleasantly in any environment and in any space time as they are also able to benefit others like themselves. This was the eudaemonious Epicurus which means extremely ingenious and he lived and died as such along with his eudaemonious friends. 😊

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2020 at 7:31 AM

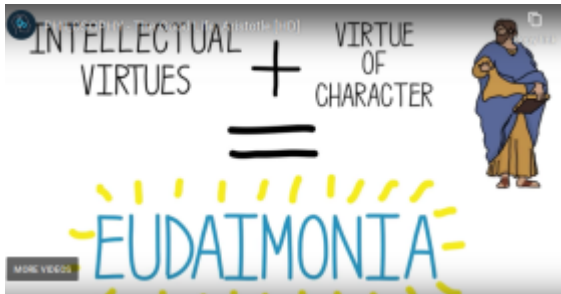
Elli correct me if I am wrong but you are discussing the general Greek background meaning of the word correct? In specific philosophies my observation is that eudaemonia as a term is most frequently associated today with Aristotle rather than Epicurus, and the Aristotelian definition is generally considered to be that stated in the graphic below.

I note that in the opening of that video the lecturer says that the argument against pleasure (he says bodily pleasure) is that it is not "peculiarly associated with human beings" and that a life of pleasure is fit only for "cattle."

That's the Ciceronian argument cited above - as if that were a reason to deny pleasure the guideship of life, simply because that's what all other living things do!

and so then of course what separates us from other animals according the video/Aristotle?
REASON!

Thus pleasure is displaced as the goal to be replaced with "reason."



And thus we have the ambiguity and the dispute about the meaning of the word "happiness" which means one thing to an Aristotelian and something entirely different to an Epicurean:



Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2020 at 9:05 AM

Comments on other slides from the Aristotle / Eudaemonia presentation:

(1) (1:50 in the presentation) I think this one is significant because the implication, which is pretty much express, is that "first principles" are a source of knowledge. The lecturer is implying that $E=mc^2$ is a "first principle" which is an independent source of knowledge

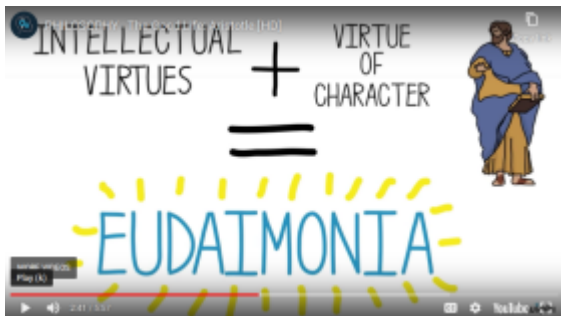
separate and apart from observation. I believe that Epicurus would dispute this, and contend that $E=mc^2$ is derived from observation, and is not itself an independent source of knowledge. The contention that "first principles" which are implied to be arising from logic alone, or from god, or from nature through reason alone, is something that Epicurus rejected and presumably for that reason removed "reason" from the canon of truth, leaving only the senses, anticipations, and feelings, which are direct contacts with reality and thus the ultimate source of everything that we believe to be true.



(2) This "middle ground" / golden mean wordplay by Aristotle is so superficial as to hardly need discussion. There is no basis for this categorization whatsoever other than Aristotle's personal assertions.



(3) For Aristotle, eudaemonia has nothing to do with pleasure, but is the sum of intellectual virtues + virtue of character. WHY, Aristotle, WHY would we care about these if they did not bring pleasure?????



(4) More groundless "moderation" wordplay, allegedly tied to "reason," by which we are to recognize "good" and "bad" behavior! All totally groundless. Why would be concerned about any of this gymnastics if it did not bring pleasure?



In sum: Epicurus would say that good and bad, right and wrong, are contentless abstractions that are meaningless apart from a particular context, and that context does not come through REASON, but through the feelings of pleasure and pain, which alone tell us what to choose and to avoid so as to make life worth living. It is as ridiculous to say that life gains meaning through reason as it would be to say that life gains meaning through "the English language" or "through the German language" or "the Spanish language" or through hammers or screwdrivers or yardsticks - or "friendship." All of those are nothing more than tools for the achievement of pleasure.

Post by "Elli" of January 16, 2020 at 11:15 AM

Frankly, as an Epicurean, I do not give a dime of how Aristotle used the term of "eudaemonia" in accordance with his dialectical acrobats based on an absolute and universal morality of who is the good man and who is the bad man, along with his logic of excluded middle with the dilemmas of what is good or not good etc.

The only I know and I feel is how Epicurus used the same term of "eudaemonia" in accordance with his methodology of the Canon in consistency with his Physics and Ethics. In those "anticipations" of the Canon something has been engraved intuitively as a talent in a human being, and any talent can be expressed and improved through the exercises/experiences by the driven force that is the pleasure and nothing more or less. The talented man that knows the art of how to live like god among the mob of men is the ingenious man that is spreading benefit and pleasure with his like-minded friends as he also knows who are his like-minded friends. The eudaemonious Epicurus was such an artist that knew the art of living like a god among the unknown men of the mob.

Finally, philosophy is not a production and trading with products i.e. selling books and going next to leaders for giving them pieces of advice mixed with tangle and confusing issues on how they should live for the devious purpose of earning money from them, as Plato, Aristotle and the stoics did and still are doing.

No, Philosophy is the art of life that is expressed with thoughts and proved with actions of a team that constitutes of like-minded friends that have the same goal living their life pleasantly. And those of any team that are the best artists and the best doctors among the mob of men, will be engraved into the memories of the mob of men. Because any posthumous reputation that comes after a benefit to the others it becomes without being asked as a begging from others. We epicureans are the "mega fronountes" (see ES 45) i.e. we are extremely pride of what we really are. Because the epicureans never have lived like beggars to advise other beggars of the mob on how all they get along for living like good andrapoda (slaves) with or without any god.

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2020 at 1:07 PM

I agree with Elli and will go further. There was never any need, nor is there any need now, to use the word "eudaimonia" in English discussion of philosophy, whether Aristotelian, Epicurean or any other kind, because the word is just the original Greek word for "good spirits," as stated in wikipedia:

Etymologically, it consists of the words "eu" ("good") and "[daimōn](#)" ("spirit"). It is a central concept in [Aristotelian ethics](#) and [political philosophy](#), along with the terms "[aretē](#)", most often translated as "[virtue](#)" or "excellence", and "[phronesis](#)", often translated as "practical or ethical wisdom"

Extending the prior recent comments about there being no bright line distinctions between men and other higher animals, there are no bright-line distinctions between Greeks and other humans. No matter how high a regard I may hold for Epicurus, he was a human being just like us, and he spoke an ordinary language just like all of us do, and unless and until he (or Aristotle or some other philosopher) specifically designated a technical term as having a technical meaning, we should presume that a word he used had the ordinary meaning and significance that it had to ordinary people. And so far as I am aware they did not - it is just a "catch-all" term that euphemistically describes what people regard as a good life, but that statement in itself "a good life" tells us nothing whatsoever.

To leave the word untranslated and focus on it as something mysteriously untranslatable - as in this video cited above- is just more woo-woo by philosophy teachers designed to hide the ball and imply that they themselves have access to some kind of esoteric wisdom that normal people who don't speak Greek do not.

And I would say the same about ataraxia and aponia - I would assert that "absence of disturbance" and "absence of pain" contain all the precision that those words have ever meant to convey.

Post by “Elli” of January 16, 2020 at 2:19 PM

Epicurus is dead and does not care if anybody regards him high or low although all the past epicureans or not epicureans from all over the world knew excellent the greek language e.g. Lucian of Samosata. And I, as Hellene epicurean I say with frankness of speech that whoever fights against the word "eudaemonia" fights against Epicurus his philosophy , with the word "hedone" to be used by us now as "hedonic calculus". And that is because, IMO the word "eudaemonia" has been erased by those christian "holy fathers", the popes and all the priesthood who fought the word "eudeamonius" that meant the extremely pleasant and ingenious human being, for became after the word deamon and be transformed as an evil spirit i.e. the devil himself that is against to the abrahamic god who is goodness himself. With such devious tricks, they erased the meaning of greek words, and they turned upside down all the greek values along with all the scientific discoveries, for leading mankind to medieval ages.

No, the word **eudeaemonia** is an extremely pleasant and useful word, as hedone and orgasm are pleasant and usefull words too, and from now on they will survive as any greek word had survived to be used by all the scientists in the fields of all sciences and all over the world. Philosophy is the mother of all sciences and Epicurus had studied the philosophies of others cleaning all the mess that was done by them, for the purpose to give us with **clarity** what was the classic greek world that inspired the classic roman world.

What's happens with you my friend Cassius ? English language has more than 50.000 greek words and you've been stuck only in one greek word? 😊😋

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2020 at 2:58 PM

[Quote from elli](#)

for the purpose to give us with clarity what was the classic greek world that inspired the classic roman world.

Yes clarity is the issue! "Eudaemonia" spoken and used by Elli in explaining the benefits of the wisdom of Epicurus is a wonderful and clarifying thing. "Eudaemonia" or "ataraxia" or "aponia" spoken and written by a philosophy professor in a manner used to imply that the concept of the best life can only be understood by a Greek - or more precisely, only understood by a Doctor of Philosophy with a degree from a University -- is a very bad and misleading thing.

A professor who insists that only the original word form is acceptable the modern equivalent of Plato saying **"Let no one ignorant of Geometry enter here!"** 😊

So I would contend that one need not know a word of Greek to understand Epicurus, or a word of German to understand Nietzsche, or a word of French to understand Gassendi, or a word of English to understand Jefferson. It certainly helps, though, to make sure that we aren't being misled by the translators and commentators!

But of course, I will definitely admit that if we never learn Greek we will never be able to speak with the gods, even if we could reach them in the intermundia! 😊

Post by "Elli" of January 16, 2020 at 3:39 PM

Who were Nietzsche, Gassendi and Jefferson ? They were simple men, and they knew the greek language very well as they read greek texts from the prototypes, as well as many other philosophers when they wrote or spoke for greek issues they used many greek words. I fully understand your worries, my friend, on the usage of greek words, since you do not know the greek language, and frankly I prefer your insistence to this, since for someone to have ignorance on something and pretending that he knows it, it is more dangerous than to say "I do not know this". But the passion i.e. our love for something (or someone) makes us to know and learn it to the most along with its characteristics and details. Frankly, If I was married with a foreign man and he insisted to not learn my language as I was trying to learn his language, this it could be an issue for divorce. 😊

Post by "Cassius" of January 16, 2020 at 3:53 PM

Ha! And that reminds me that a common language is no guarantee of understanding anything either, with the well known joke that America and England are two nations divided by a common language!

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Note: interesting history of that quote: <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2016/04/03/common/>

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 16, 2020 at 11:36 PM

I guess it's not wrong to believe that the word happiness that is repeatedly used across Epicurus works is Eudaimonia. I don't think of any problem with it so long as we understand that the highest good is pleasure and not happiness. The important thing is that we are aware that the relationship between the two makes each other like identical. Torquatus said that "to live happily is nothing except to live with pleasure."

Even Aristotle said that happiness "...is some plain and obvious thing like pleasure."

Our debate today is not new. It was already being debated in ancient Greece. Here is the full context from Nicomachean Ethics, "Verbally there is a very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is [eudaimonia], and identify living well and faring well with being happy; but with regard to what [eudaimonia] is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise. For the former think it is some plain and obvious thing like pleasure, wealth or honour..."

Aristotle and Torquatus consider happiness and pleasure to mean the same thing. Therefore, it must not be a big issue if we sometimes use them interchangeably as this is also used interchangeably in some of the texts we use such as the Letter to Menoecus, PD, VS, and On Ends. Besides, Epicurus is not big on definitions or essences of things. Since the debate about this was already existing in ancient Greece, Epicurus would probably think of happiness and pleasure the way Aristotle and Torquatus would understand them. If not, where can we find a proof that Epicurus made any distinction much clearer than that of Torquatus?

Post by “Cassius” of January 16, 2020 at 11:51 PM

Great post Mike.

"Besides, Epicurus is not big on definitions or essences of things."

I think there is a deep point here. Clearly he was not "big on definitions" in the sense of wordy and elaborate logical constructions, but it seems to me, especially in reading Lucretius, that Epicurus was focusing on definition by examples. It strikes me regularly that in Lucretius and I think Epicurus letters too that Epicurus uses the device of giving a lineup of examples each time he wants to identify something, such as when Lucretius first references atoms and immediately says he will call them by different names. Seems to me that this is a conscious form of "definition by example" which would be consistent with the premises of the philosophy being grounded in the senses.

Watch for that especially in Lucretius and I think it begins to jump out at you. They were teaching by pointing to real world examples rather than by setting up word-play definitions.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 17, 2020 at 12:04 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurus was focusing on definition by examples.

You nailed it! In my language which is Filipino (Tagalog), We have the word "Maligaya" which is more like Eudaimonia and "Masaya" which is more like pleasure. We are not confused about the two especially if we use examples or say them with appropriate connotations. We translate "Are you happy with your work?" with "Maligaya ka ba sa trabaho mo?" or "Masaya ka ba sa trabaho mo?" interchangeably. Ordinary Filipinos would understand them to be the same thing. So when I tell them in Tagalog what Epicureanism is, they don't encounter any confusion about happiness and pleasure much the same as when I talk to a Filipino language teacher.

Post by “Cassius” of January 17, 2020 at 12:25 AM

I see I have uncovered a major new problem: Mike and I are time zone incompatible, and he gets going right when I am about to fall asleep! I will see what I can do to fix that, but in the meantime I am afraid I am out for the night. Keep up the posting and I will catch up tomorrow! (And stay away from the Volcano!)

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 17, 2020 at 12:30 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I see I have uncovered a major new problem: Mike and I are time zone incompatible, and he gets going right when I am about to fall asleep! I will see what I can do to fix that, but in the meantime I am afraid I am out for the night. Keep up the posting and I will catch up tomorrow! (And stay away from the Volcano!)

Thanks Cassius. Anyways, I can be at any time zone depending on my daily chores. Ok, I think you are getting sleepy. Good night. See you here again tomorrow. 😊

Post by “Cassius” of January 17, 2020 at 9:05 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Epicurus was focusing on definition by examples.

And wherever possible, it seems to me that Epicureans and the leading Epicureans gave examples in the form of "pictures" - such as referencing sheep on the side of the hill blending into a white spot, floating dusk for atoms, the shades at the Colosseum giving color to the Senators beneath them, etc. The point being that Epicurus necessarily had to use words, but his words were tied as closely as possible to "pictures" of things in everyday experience. And I think that is what he was referring to in the letter to Herodotus referring to following the first picture that a word evokes in order to not get lost in word games.

Quote

For this purpose it is essential that the first mental image associated with each word should be regarded, and that there should be no need of explanation, if we are really to have a standard to which to refer a problem of investigation or reflection or a mental inference. (Letter to Herodotus)

So probably another example might be that we learn much more about happiness by observing (observing, actual or pictures) examples of smiling people, tail-wagging dogs, purring cats, playing children, etc. than we ever learn about happiness by listing out 50 different words in different languages that allegedly mean the same thing, or looking up synonyms in a thesaurus,

or reading about the etymology of any word for "happiness" in a dictionary.

Clarity of expression in dealing with happiness or pleasure ultimately comes back to those personal experiences in examples, not stinging together a series of symbols that, but for our definitions, are absolutely meaningless in Nature.

Post by “Elli” of January 17, 2020 at 3:55 PM

From Epicurus LTM : We must then meditate on the things that make our **eudaemonia**, seeing that when that is with us we have all, but when it is absent we do all to win it.

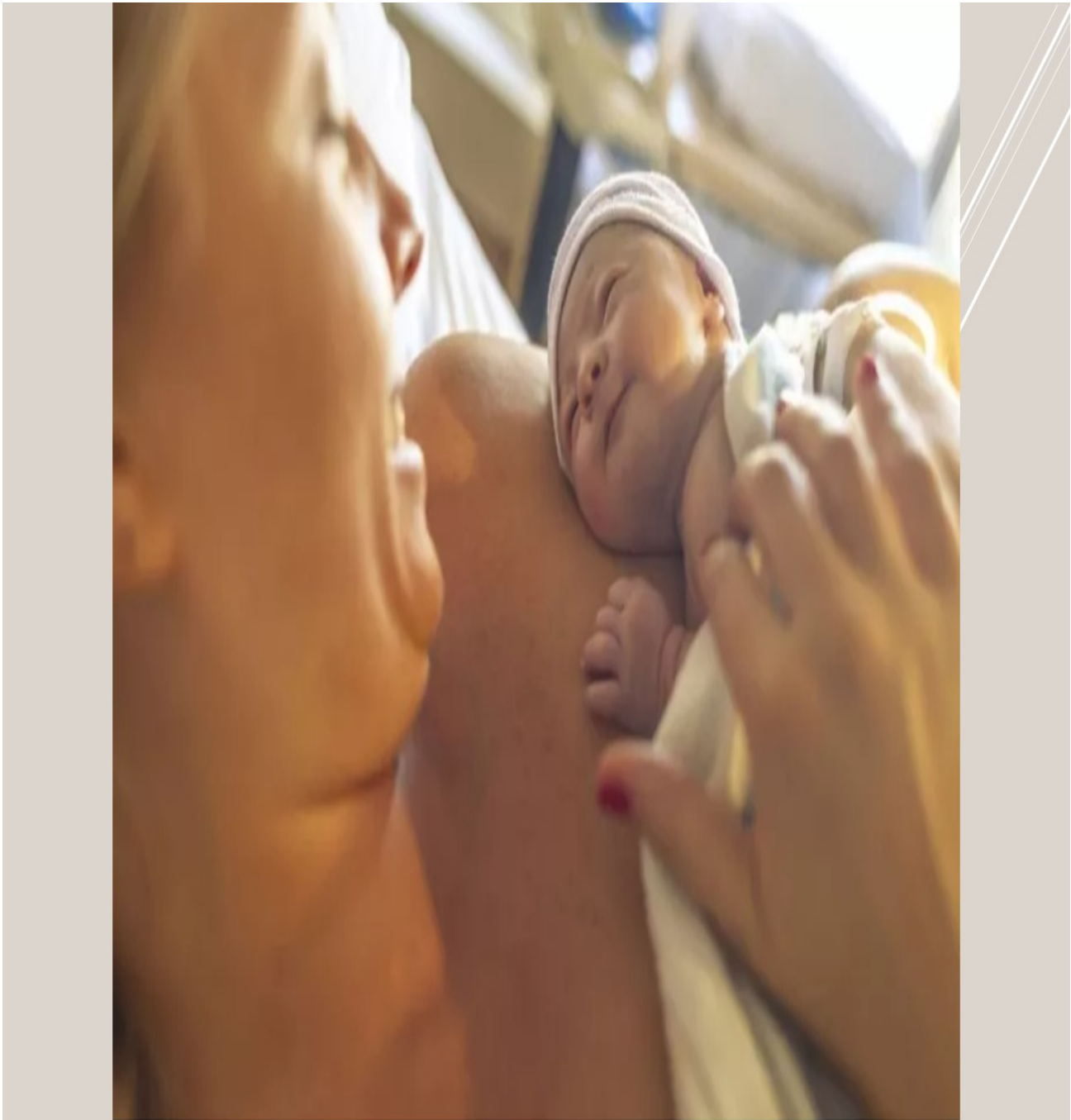
It is notable that, in the starting point and ending point of the LTM Epicurus remains on common ground with all **eudaemonist** philosophies, and then he proceeds to the first principle of his philosophy that is the goal of **pleasure/hedone**. The Letter to Menoecus is very carefully structured, exhibiting a deliberate array of subtopics and subtle gradation of nuance.

Back to first principles and on the basis of observation in Nature and human nature, before is corrupted with the empty beliefs. I have a question for this well-mood i.e. the sense of feeling of contentment or fullness that is given by Epicurus with the word "**eudaemonia**" and affirms that that is "**with us**".

As I said above is already engraved/intuitive in the molecular basis of DNA/RNA in the body of human beings, because if we observe carefully the neonates of just a week we will realize that when they are clean and with a full stomach and during their sleep or awoken are smiling often. This happens every day, and many times during the day, and I am not sure if this happens when they are in the womb. And after four weeks or more they smile with the socialized smile i.e. after eye contact with their parents or hearing sounds voices/melodies.

Of course, our friend Elayne, who is a pediatrician, knows better than me, and she is able to explain to us this phenomenon with the neonates that are smiling so early in life.

What are the mental images that are connected with concepts of words that the newborn baby has accumulated already in mind for the feeling of contentment as "eudaemonia" ? In neonates of some weeks, there are no words yet, not mental images with sheep and cows. Just senses and emotions/feelings that were born with them and are in the procedure of development and enrichment through experiences as their first social contact is within their family. And then our big societies all over that inside them are some devious and really evil persons waiting to corrupt them with lies and frauds, and many of these human beings will be lucky enough if they won't get into a madhouse.



Newborn baby smiling.

Post by “Cassius” of January 17, 2020 at 4:14 PM

[Quote from elli](#)

What are the mental images that are connected with concepts of words that the newborn baby has accumulated already in mind for the feeling of contentment as "eudaemonia" ? In neonates of some weeks, there are no words yet, not mental images with sheep and cows. Just senses and emotions/feelings that were born with them and are in the procedure of development and enrichment through experiences as their first social contact is within their family.

Right -- these babies are "happy" even though they do not know a single word, or a single point of logic, which shows that neither words nor logic are necessary for happiness at the earliest stages of life, to which we look as examples of those who are uncorrupted.

Post by "Elli" of January 17, 2020 at 4:25 PM

ΚΔ.(1) Τὸ **μακάριον** καὶ **ἄφθαρτον** οὔτε αὐτὸ πράγματα ἔχει οὔτε ἄλλω παρέχει, ὥστε οὔτε ὀργαῖς οὔτε χάρισι συνέχεται· ἐν ἀσθενεῖ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον.

Doctrine 1. That which is **blessed** and **incorruptible** neither has any concerns on things nor does provide (things) to anyone else so that it has no part either in anger or in favors because all such things exist only in the weak.

XXXIII.(33) Σαρκὸς φωνῆ τὸ μὴ πεινῆν, τὸ μὴ διψῆν, τὸ μὴ ῥίγουν ταῦτὰ γὰρ ἔχων τις καὶ ἐλπίζων ἔξειν κἂν <Διῖ> ὑπὲρ **εὐδαιμονίας** μαχέσαιτο.

33. The **flesh cries out** to be **saved** from **hunger, thirst, and cold**. For if a man **possesses** this **safety** and hope to possess it, he might **rival** even Zeus in **eudaemonia**.

Post by "Cassius" of January 17, 2020 at 5:44 PM

These are excellent examples of citations to eudaimonia, Elli. It is interesting to think about how it is we might be able to rival Zeus in eudaimonia, which is based on pleasure, rather than saying that we might rival Zeus in pleasure itself.

What do you think about that - was Epicurus intending to make that distinction?

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 17, 2020 at 10:25 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Right -- these babies are "happy" even though they do not know a single word, or a single point of logic, which shows that neither words nor logic are necessary for happiness at the earliest stages of life, to which we look as examples of those who are uncorrupted.

This is interesting. If that is the case, no words or knowledge can explain well what happiness really is. So in order to tell the lay audience what it is, we have to explain it by making our words produce a picture that is easy to imagine. Using examples is a lot helpful.

Post by “Charles” of January 17, 2020 at 10:39 PM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

If that is the case, no words or knowledge can explain well what happiness really is.

Which is why practice and translating our words into living actions is of extreme importance 😊

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 17, 2020 at 11:30 PM

[Quote from Charles](#)

Which is why practice and translating our words into living actions is of extreme importance 😊

Gotcha! Action speaks louder than words. The application of Epicureanism in all aspects of our daily life will best define happiness and pleasure. Besides, Epicurean philosophy is straightforward and not as abstract as that of Plato, Kant, or Hegel. It's ethics is obviously practical, hence not complicated to practice.

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 17, 2020 at 11:59 PM

But for the sake of studying what Epicurus is teaching us about happiness and pleasure, it is clear that they are two different things that are similar. It is still important to determine the exactness of their differences so we can avoid some false interpretations of the real message of Epicurus. If happiness for Epicurus is Eudamonia, that doesn't mean pleasure is ataraxia the way the absence of pain doesn't necessarily mean pleasure. I guess there is nothing else to define pleasure since it's the ultimate definition of such feeling. It is happiness that needs refinement.

Post by “Charles” of January 18, 2020 at 12:18 AM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

If happiness for Epicurus is Eudamonia, that doesn't mean pleasure is ataraxia the way the absence of pain doesn't necessarily mean pleasure.

I very much agree with you on this point. But it is established in multiple sources (Torquatus, LtM, PD, VS) that pleasure can mean the absence of pain, however that's not to undermine pleasure as the satisfaction and fulfillment of desire. Bear in mind, Epicurean Philosophy is hedonistic for recognizing that **pleasure is the chief good**. Getting stuck on minor definitions or playing word games can lead us in circles, whether its eudaimonia as the Greek language says it, or happiness, or bliss, or blessedness, the destination we should always find ourselves heading towards is *pleasure*.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 18, 2020 at 1:11 AM

As I understand it, life is the greatest good. Pleasure is the guide to and goal of life.

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2020 at 3:33 AM

[Quote from Godfrey](#)

As I understand it, life is the greatest good. Pleasure is the guide to and goal of life.

That is DeWitt's formulation, of which the second sentence seems completely accurate as what Epicurus taught. As for the first sentence, I largely agree with it, but my current view/understanding of the issue leads me to focus on it being true only in the same way that DeWitt analyses the phrase "[all sensations are true](#)" -- as a statement where you have to be very careful with the definitions of the key words.

Here I think the main issue is that term "the greatest good." "Greatest" is probably clear enough, but "greatest good" has some major ambiguities, and I am not sure that Epicurus really endorsed a concept of a "greatest good" in the way that the term was used by the other Greeks. What is "good" other than pleasure? It is pretty clear that Epicurus held nothing to be intrinsically good - worthy of choice in and of itself - other than pleasure. And there are an innumerable number of ways to experience pleasure, none of which are intrinsically "better" than others in and of themselves.

I think in part DeWitt is focusing on his observation that "pleasure has meaning only to the living" and to the resulting observation that unless we have life, no pleasure is possible, which makes life that without which there is no possibility of experiencing pleasure. But life as a condition of pleasure is different from saying that something is a guide, or even a goal.

My current viewpoint is that a "greatest good" analysis (the framework with which Torquatus starts off) is probably not an approach that Epicurus himself thought well of, and probably arises from the Epicureans feeling obligated to respond to the Stoics and Platonists. Trying to define "greatest good" too precisely probably smacks more of a Stoic / Platonic tendency to want to come up with a precise definition in words of something that is inherently impossible to express completely in words. I think that is the feel we get from what Epicurus said that Plutarch summarizes as :

Plutarch, That Epicurus actually makes a pleasant life impossible, 7, p. 1091A: Not only is the basis that they assume for the pleasurable life untrustworthy and insecure, it is quite trivial and paltry as well, inasmuch as their "thing delighted" - their good - is an escape from ills, and they say that they can conceive of no other, and indeed that our nature has no place at all in which to put its good except the place left when its evil is expelled. ... Epicurus too makes a similar statement to the effect that the good is a thing that arises out of your very escape from evil and from your memory and reflection and gratitude that this has happened to you. His words are these: ***"That which produces a jubilation unsurpassed is the nature of good, if you apply your mind rightly and then stand firm and do not stroll about {a jibe at the Peripatetics}, prating meaninglessly about the good."***

Post by “Elli” of January 18, 2020 at 5:49 AM

Cassius said : These are excellent examples of citations to eudaimonia, Elli. It is interesting to think about how it is we might be able to rival Zeus in eudaimonia, which is based on pleasure, rather than saying that we might rival Zeus in pleasure itself.

What do you think about that - was Epicurus intending to make that distinction?

There is not a distinction actually but a description with the usage of such terms that are based on gradations of nuance among the feelings of pleasure and pain, as it is the grey color among black and white since there are "measurements" (with thoughts and actions) of a whole life that have to be done by us, and as long as this life lasts. And that is because in our life there are the **distractions/obstacles with some painful situations**, and these obstacles **are NOT OUR OPINIONS**, as the stoics claim for leading us to apathy, duty, fate and the goal of an abstract virtue.

For this, we also say that we do not choose a pleasure that leads to a pain, as similarly, we choose and a pain to achieve a greater pleasure. The removal of a painful situation is an unsurpassed joy (that is a description of pleasure too) and this is the nature of the good as Epicurus responds to Aristotelians who were strolling around and about on what is good and what is bad etc etc.

The word "joy" is given in greek language with two words "γῆθος ἢ χαρά" [pron. githos or chara]. Epicurus starts his letters to his friends with the word "χαίρειν" that means "be joyful" which also means "be pleasant". And Metrodorus used the word "joy" in one of the epicurean sayings "do not postpone your joy because you have only one and unique life". The Greek language is rich, and any person in any language, of course, grasps the meaning of words as joy, happy etc that all are synonymous with pleasure. It is not a word game, it is just the power of things whenever and whoever is speaking with words, for all things and issues that are not by themselves, but the power in them is when we bring them into the reality of our life, for making our calculations and for communicating with each other, since we have been evolved and survive as social beings and to communicate with each other with the sounds of words. Lucretius in the Latin language used many-many powerful words in his masterpiece and I think he invented and new terms for the purpose to describe the Nature of all Things.

For Epicurus, as he observed the phenomena and our nature there is not, for him, in a duration of time, an absolute, objective, and perfect pleasure or an absolute, objective and perfect pain. As, there is not for him an absolute, objective and perfect justice/beauty/honesty etc. For Epicurus there is not any moderation of any golden rule. There are only limits in a procedure for the achievement of the goal of pleasure, as also for him, there are means called as virtues that

spring from prudence measured in accordance with the circumstances and consequences of the experiences of the person, as also for Epicurus , there is not a pain or pleasure meter since the limits are due to subjectivity on feelings in accordance with time and space that any human being lives. For this, is not given by him a list on any marble stone on what we should do for living our life pleasantly.

There are some persons that claim deviously accusing Epicurus of living in a cave with bread and water and they make the conclusion that in our era to have a car is unnatural and unnecessary. No, the desire for traveling and visiting other places, unknown and known persons as friends **it is not unnatural and unnecessary desire.** It is a must. It is the enrichment of memories and feelings. As it was the horse in the Epicurus era, now is the car and airplane for traveling. And if we are incapable yet to accumulate the power/energy from our star/sun or air, and we still are fighting each other for the oil for using the means of transportation and the means for cultivation of our food, we do not get under the economical/political orders to eliminate our desires and following the motto of "frugality" for living our life in a cave with bread and water and that's fine. No, we will try with all of our efforts to investigate Nature since the investigation is in our nature, for living like gods among gods. This is **eudaemonia** !

BECAUSE we have to remember and to not forget (this is the word "a+litheia" (true) in greek that means "without oblivion") this again and again: **Every explanation without the core that exists in Epicurean philosophy is something just to talk about since every issue and every term in Epicurean philosophy has a fixed bond with pleasure. For EP every of our choice and avoidance, in our life, serves the pleasure, and it has the pleasure in its foundation i.e. inside its core. If you follow false philosophies, false religions with obsessions, false ideologies with -isms, false mainstreams, false economical, sociological, psychological theories, it is sure that you will end up compromised, subordinated and manipulated, so then the pleasure is lost, as well as your study in Nature and Epicurean Philosophy loses its core and disappears too. So, when someone confuses things and issues with the study of EP that is a whole, he has not to say for himself that is an epicurean, he is something else that pretends that he is an epicurean.** 🤔

Post by "Mike Anyayahan" of January 18, 2020 at 6:43 AM

[Quote from elli](#)

There are some persons that claim deviously accusing Epicurus of living in a cave with bread and water and they make the conclusion that in our era to have a car is

unnatural and unnecessary. No, the desire for traveling and visiting other places, unknown and known persons as friends **it is not unnatural and unnecessary desire**. It is a must. It is the enrichment of memories and feelings. As it was the horse in the Epicurus era, now is the car and airplane for traveling. And if we are incapable yet to accumulate the power/energy from our star/sun or air, and we still are fighting each other for the oil for using the means of transportation and the means for cultivation of our food, we do not get under the economical/political orders to eliminate our desires and following the motto of "frugality" for living our life in a cave with bread and water and that's fine. No, we will try with all of our efforts to investigate Nature since the investigation is in our nature, for living like gods among gods. This is **eudaemonia** !

BECAUSE we have to remember and to not forget (this is the word "a+litheia" (true) in greek that means "without oblivion") this again and again: **Every explanation without the core that exists in Epicurean philosophy is something just to talk about since every issue and every term in Epicurean philosophy has a fixed bond with pleasure. For EP every of our choice and avoidance, in our life, serves the pleasure, and it has the pleasure in its foundation i.e. inside its core. If you follow false philosophies, false religions with obsessions, false ideologies with -isms, false mainstreams, false economical, sociological, psychological theories, it is sure that you will end up compromised, subordinated and manipulated, so then the pleasure is lost, as well as your study in Nature and Epicurean Philosophy loses its core and disappears too. So, when someone confuses things and issues with the study of EP that is a whole, he has not to say for himself that is an epicurean, he is something else that pretends that he is an epicurean.** 🤔

I agree with this. A rich man who is grateful, happy, not anxious, appreciative, and prudent can become an Epicurean much more than a poor guy who is too anxious even with little things. It is not the amount of possession that counts but the attitude toward the possession.

Post by "Mike Anyayahan" of January 18, 2020 at 6:58 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I think in part DeWitt is focusing on his observation that "pleasure has meaning only to the living" and to the resulting observation that unless we have life, no pleasure is possible, which makes life that without which there is no possibility of experiencing

pleasure.

Yes Cassius. I agree. This was my point I'd like to reiterate when I said that death can remove all our pains, but it won't make us happy nor live in pleasure since we are already dead. This is why I understand pleasure not literally to be the absence of pain but something that is produced by the absence of pain and that will exist as pleasure together with that absence of pain that has produced it.

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2020 at 7:09 AM

[Quote from Mike Anyayahan](#)

something that is produced by the absence of pain [Users Online](#) in and that will exist as pleasure together with that absence of pain that has produced it.

OK not to pick nits again but i think the "produced by" can be taken too far. Ultimately I don't think I would agree that pleasure is produced by absence of pain any more than it would be correct to say that atoms are produced by absence of void, would it? Yes the only way to remove a feeling of pain is to replace it with pleasure, because of the nature of the beast - if we feel anything, it is either pleasure or pain in the Epicurean scheme. But to say "produced by" adds another dimension with implications that cannot be sustained.

When you derived pleasure from smelling a rose, what pain did you remove to achieve that pleasure? So I think it is important not to carry "produced by" too far.

Post by “Cassius” of January 18, 2020 at 7:12 AM

[Quote from elli](#)

For Epicurus, as he observed the phenomena and our nature there is not, for him, in a duration of time, an absolute, objective, and perfect pleasure or an absolute, objective and perfect pain. As, there is not for him an absolute, objective and perfect justice/beauty/honesty etc.

I agree with this too, and think it is a very important point. "Perfect pleasure" is probably a useful term to indicate "pure pleasure" (a condition of pleasurable experience when you are conscious of no simultaneous pains) but not to indicate that there is a ranking in types of pleasure indicating a single type of experience that is better than all others (that is it would be incorrect to pick out a single experience "the taste of apple pie" and hold it to be the "best" or "perfect pleasure.")

Post by “Mike Anyayahan” of January 18, 2020 at 8:06 AM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

OK not to pick nits again but i think the "produced by" can be taken too far. Ultimately I don't think I would agree that pleasure is produced by absence of pain any more than it would be correct to say that atoms are produced by absence of void, would it? Yes the only way to remove a feeling of pain is to replace it with pleasure, because of the nature of the beast - if we feel anything, it is either pleasure or pain in the Epicurean scheme. But to say "produced by" adds another dimension with implications that cannot be sustained.

When you derived pleasure from smelling a rose, what pain did you remove to achieve that pleasure? So I think it is important not to carry "produced by" too far.

The production of pleasure by the removal of pain is not my personal opinion. It is how I understand what Torquatus said in the second paragraph of part XL of the Book 1 of On Ends. He said "For, as when hunger and thirst are driven away by meat and drink, the very removal of the annoyance brings with it the attainment of pleasure, so in every case, the removal of pain PRODUCES the succession of pleasure. And therefore Epicurus would not admit that there was any intermediate state between pleasure and pain;"

As I understand it, painlessness does not necessarily mean pleasure because painlessness is the end process of the removal of pain that produces pleasure. Therefore, there is only either pain and pleasure (not either pain or the absence of pain)

My point is that the absence or removal of pain does not define pleasure so it would be strange if I say that pleasure is the removal of pain. It says here that there is pleasure after the removal of pain. The process of removing pain is not a state but a process that turns pain into pleasure nor a state of painlessness that defines pleasure.